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WESTMONASTERII,

Die 15 *Decembris*, 1921.

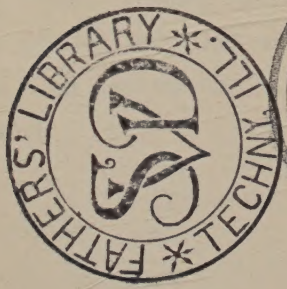
SHORT SERMONS
ON THE EPISTLES & GOSPELS OF THE SUNDAYS OF THE YEAR

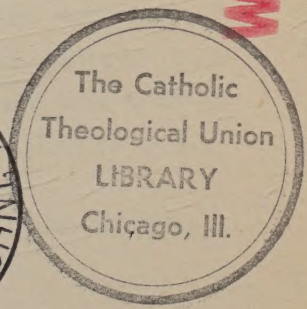
WITHDRAWN

BY THE

REV. F. P. HICKEY, O.S.B.

MONK OF AMPLEFORTH ABBEY





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PREFACE

THIS volume of "Short Sermons on the Epistles and Gospels of the Sundays of the Year" has been written in the hope of its being of some little service to my brother priests, when wearied and harassed with money matters, schools, sick calls, and long hours in the confessional, and the inevitable Sunday sermon still to be prepared.

THE AUTHOR.

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First Sunday of Advent

THE REDEEMER

"Your redemption is at hand."—LUKE xxi. 28.

1. Redemption needed; but how?
2. God made Man to redeem mankind.
3. Wrong notion of the Messias.
4. How blessed are we to know the Saviour.
5. Let us prepare to welcome Him.

SOLEMN and sublime thoughts should lift up our hearts at the beginning of this holy time of Advent. The anniversary of the coming of our Redeemer is at hand; and gratitude for that blessed coming bids us raise up the eyes of our soul, and reverently peer into the mystery of God's goodness in decreeing that a Saviour should be born to save His people from their sins. From all eternity the Almighty had determined to create mankind. From all eternity He knew of the fall, of man's sinfulness and rebellion against Him, so that it would come to pass, as the Scripture says, "It repented Him that He had made man" (Gen. vi. 6). His justice was outraged; His mercy despised. And poor fallen man, what could become of him? He could not retrieve the past. He could not atone for his own misdeeds. Was there no salvation for the human race?

A God was needed to make reparation and atonement for the outrages against a God! for the outrages of unbelief, of blasphemy, of hatred, of the impurities, and of all the evils that spring up from the depraved hearts of sinners. Then was the mystery of love

declared that astounded heaven; that caused countless angels to rebel; for poor fallen man was to be more honoured than themselves. The second Person of the Blessed Trinity willingly offered Himself to come to the rescue of mankind. As God, He could not suffer, but a body and a soul united to the divine Person, and behold Emmanuel—God with us, our Redeemer! "Behold! I come," He said. A Man to suffer; a God to offer! The justice of the Almighty to be plácated; His mercy to be thanked; His love to be requited! And the gates of heaven to be opened to repentant man. This is the tidings of great joy that Advent brings to the faithful.

But how little did the world understand of the divine mercy that was to come! True, God's chosen people knew that a Messias, a Saviour, had been promised. The prophets had spoken of Him. Devout men had longed for His coming and prayed that they might live to see it. But as time went on these holy aspirations faded, and in a very different and earthly way the children of Israel looked for their deliverer. A leader, a ruler to establish an earthly kingdom, a prince of peace was their expectation. Vague was their knowledge, and their yearnings were for something infinitely lower than what was to come. Not an earthly kingdom but a heavenly one was their Saviour to establish, not transient glory that would shortly perish, but immortality amidst indescribable splendour and happiness. He was to come not to rule merely, but to love mankind. He was to come, not to be inaccessible and seldom to be seen, but to be with them, one of them, whose delight was to be with the children of men.

Oh! how blessed are we, who know so well this Saviour, "this most high God and our Redeemer"

(Ps. lxxvii. 35). He that had been promised, came not only for the people of Israel, but for all mankind. He came to " save His people from their sins " (Matt. i. 21). Let us realize it more intimately. He came not simply to proclaim a universal pardon for all the multitude of the children of men. He came for me! To pardon me, to win my love, my loyalty: to recognize me as His child for whom He had opened the gates of heaven. And is this all? What could hope expect more than this? If He had brought us redemption once, would not this have been an infinitely bountiful mercy?

Let us bow down in humble confusion as we think of this! Forgiveness once; restored to our heavenly Father's favour once! An eternity of thankfulness would not suffice to pay for such a mercy. But what is the reality? Oh! the times and times that He has poured out upon our souls His " copious redemption." Our very sins bring out His mercy more and more. We are the children of the merciful goodness of God! Let us recall with grateful hearts the times without number that our redemption—our forgiveness—has been renewed. It is always at hand indeed. An act of sorrow; a humble owning of our sins; and He that came to redeem His people from their sins ratifies the words of absolution, and our sins are forgiven us once again. And our relapses, what do they mean? Do we not believe in our forgiveness? Do we despise it? Are we not trespassing on the Almighty's patience, tempting Him to repent that He made us?

Let us resolve that this rejection of God's pardon shall never occur again. But as this blessed anniversary of the coming of our Saviour approaches, let us prepare our hearts to receive Him and bid Him welcome.

No wonder good people rejoice at holy Christmas-time! It is not a mere memory of the redemption that came, but it is an actual redemption that comes again to the souls of men. How many anniversaries of His coming have we celebrated, and yet we are no better than we are! To so many in the world the message of Advent finds no admittance to their hearts. But to us it must not be so. We must prepare a home for Him, lest the first coming should be repeated: "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John i. 11).

Second Sunday of Advent

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

"The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His ways."—PROV. viii. 22.

1. The Redeemer and His Mother.
2. Therefore Immaculate for His honour.
3. No change of belief in the Church, but now all bound to believe the doctrine.
4. Effects: increase of devotion to Mary Immaculate; and more manifest proofs of the power of her intercession.

THE dominant thought in this holy time of Advent is the coming of the Redeemer. How appropriate it is, then, that there occurs at this time the Festival of the Immaculate Conception. For the Son of God offering Himself to become a Man to redeem us, a Mother had to be chosen for Him. A Mother of God! Picture the amazement of the angels in heaven that a human creature could possibly be so exalted! The purest, the holiest, the humblest of all the daughters of Eve was chosen.

But above all the endowments of grace, above all her virtues, one singular prerogative was needed and was granted. This chosen one should never for an instant be under the curse of fallen man. Original sin could not be allowed to taint her soul. "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His ways." This is what we believe in accepting and professing the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

But is it not the boast and glory of the Holy Catholic Church that its faith is and has been always the same? That what was believed from the first is the faith of all its children always and everywhere? How can this be, says the world, when within our memory the Immaculate Conception was declared to be an article of faith? The definition was simply a declaration that belief in the Immaculate Conception had always existed, and was the mind and sense of the Church. Proof irrefragable of this is found in holy Tradition, in the writings of the Fathers of the Church, in the unanimity of the rulers and the faithful of the Church in venerating our Lady's Conception as such. What had been formerly freely, willingly, lovingly believed, was now declared to be a necessary part of our belief. Henceforth obedience to the Church demanded full, explicit belief and profession of this doctrine, that Mary in the first instant of her Conception was preserved from every stain of original sin by the power of Almighty God, to His honour and glory, and the glory of His chosen Mother.

And why was this declaration necessary? To defend the honour and glory of Mary. Impiety was assailing her; disbelief was denying her holiness; and the world was sneering at her purity. Cowardly Catholics thought it prudent not to provoke impiety to insult our Lady and wished to be silent; and doubt was stealing into the souls of the poorly instructed, and of many seduced by the irreligious. Therefore for God's honour and glory, and of His Virgin Mother, it was made imperative to believe and to own that the Virgin Mary was Immaculate. What had formerly been professed in love, had now to be professed in obedience as well, by the loyal children of the Church.

The other saints and blessed ones of God are crowned

with many graces, but Mary is " full of grace " and is favoured with one that no other can share with her. She is Immaculate ! And this being her unique privilege, no other supplication to her touches her Mother's heart as this: " Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us, who have recourse to thee."

Two effects result from this belief and profession in the Immaculate Conception. The first is a wonderful increase in devotion to our Blessed Lady.

Not only have prayers been multiplied, but the wearing of her medals, the use of the Rosary, the holy pictures and statues in homes and in churches, all have increased. But above all we can notice the public testifying of our love and veneration of Mary. A few years ago, pilgrimages had almost died out in these countries. But now, not only is no one afraid to be a pilgrim, but publicly and enthusiastically pilgrimages are joined by rich and poor. The sneers of the world are silenced. Yea, even in non-Catholic papers we read paragraphs—tolerant, kindly, sympathetic—about the blind and ailing journeying to distant Lourdes in faith and hope, seeking the help of Mary Immaculate.

And does Mary fail to respond to her children's faith and trust ? This is the second wonderful result in the belief in the Immaculate Conception: the miracles that Mary works through her intercession. There are countless wonders wrought in the souls of men; of those we know nothing. They are recorded by the angels. But we Catholics rejoice, and the world cannot deny, that there are many marvellous and incontestible miracles wrought year after year at Lourdes. In this age of doubt and unbelief, miracles are multiplied in behalf of those who turn to the Immaculate Virgin in their misery and distress. Thus this most favoured,

honoured, exalted Queen of angels and of saints proves that she hearkens to and graciously answers the prayers of poor sinners. She loves to prove to us that, though she is the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God, she is our Mother too. Though the Almighty "has done great things" for her, she does not disdain our humble prayers.

How meet and appropriate it is, then, that our Blessed Lady's festival is the harbinger of Christmas. Her unique dignity—Immaculate from the first moment of her Conception—was given that she might be worthy to be the Mother of our divine Saviour. Praise and glorify her on this great day, and for a reward for our devotion pray her to show us at Christmas her Son, our Saviour, and to obtain for us loyalty and fidelity to Him.

Third Sunday of Advent

THE CHARACTER OF THE MESSIAS

"There hath stood One in the midst of you, whom you know not."—JOHN i. 26.

1. St. John the Baptist causes the character of the Messias to be revealed.
2. How blessed are we to know Him so well.
3. Christ's dealings with men all mercy and love.

THE prophets had foretold and partially described the Messias that was to come. But was it not most appropriate that the most explicit testimony of Him and revelation of His character should be given us by and through means of the Baptist? Therefore we find in Advent that St. John is brought before us in the gospels. His preaching, his works had led men to think that he himself was perhaps the Messias. But "he confessed, I am not the Christ," to the priests and levites, who had been sent to question him. "And the next day," says the gospel, "John saw Jesus coming to him and he saith: Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world." "And John gave testimony, saying: I saw the Spirit coming down as a dove from heaven, and He remained upon Him . . . and I saw and gave testimony that this is the Son of God" (John i.).

Moreover, the Baptist later on, when cast into prison by Herod, sent two of his disciples to our Lord, and by his questions causes our Blessed Lord to reveal Himself openly to us—the character and description

of our divine Lord given us by Himself! What excuse can man have not to know Him; and knowing Him, not to love Him and follow Him? John's disciples gave his message, "Art Thou He that art to come, or look we for another?" "And Jesus making answer, said to them: Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he that shall not be scandalised in Me" (Matt. xi. 3). Thus the Baptist drew from Christ the description of the character by which He would be known by man. The God of Truth made Man gave testimony of Himself.

How blessed are we, preparing to celebrate the anniversary of the coming of that divine Redeemer, to look upon Him portrayed so clearly by His own Blessed Self! As in those days, so now, there are countless ones that need Him. And He comes to us with the same benevolence, the same readiness, the same power to do us good. Have we not ourselves been amongst the crowds, and have we not ourselves felt the divine touch of His mercy? Perhaps we were blind, and He opened our eyes to the Faith! We may have been lying helpless on the road to heaven, powerless to proceed, and the lame have been made to walk. Lepers in sin, more than once—yea, many a time—have we been cleansed and forgiven. Alas! perhaps for years, our souls, dead to God through sinful habits, have been raised to life again by His grace. And our hard, laborious lives have been sweetened and filled with hope of eternal joy in heaven, because we poor have had the gospel preached to us.

It is well for us to realise this merciful character

of the Saviour. It was not always thus. Formerly, under the old Law, the Almighty was the God of justice. His wrath flamed out; His vengeance overtook the wicked. But now with the coming of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, how different! And this is why the Baptist gave testimony of Him and our Lord revealed Himself, so that no one could mistake the object of His coming, and no one feel that he was too utter an outcast not to be forgiven.

Then why did the Redeemer thus come, filled with compassion, ready and longing to befriend and forgive? Becoming Man Himself, He wished to be one with us, to dwell amongst us, to share our sorrows, to take upon Himself our sins and miseries: for He remembered that we were but the dust of the earth—poor, weak, and helpless creatures. He had in His mercy created us for Himself, and He came to restore us, to re-establish us, that we once again might be "the sons of God and heirs with Christ." He is the Saviour, who "loves the souls of men."

And again, He came pitying us, ready to help us, for He knew the enemies that would plot our ruin. He could not leave us helpless amidst such perils. It was through spite and hatred against Himself that the devil would never cease from trying to work our ruin. The envy of the evil one is our constant danger. Envy because the Redeemer came to raise us up and fit us for the thrones left empty by the fallen angels. To know that we are meant through the Redemption of Christ to reign in glory, whilst the fallen spirits pine in the abyss of misery, is the cause of the enmity, which can never cease, between the devils and the souls of men.

The Blessed Redeemer came to do all that even an

Almighty and all-loving God could do to save poor mankind from eternal death. He came " to save His people from their sins." Will it not, then, be all our own sad, miserable fault if the evil one prevails against us? Shall we not, then, welcome Him at this holy time, and offer Him loyalty and loving obedience? Trust in His goodness, for He came " to seek and to save that which was lost."

Fourth Sunday of Advent

CHRISTMAS

"There was no room for them in the inn."—Luke ii. 7.

1. The thought of home.
2. But no home for the poor wayfarers at Bethlehem.
3. Now, as then, our Lord seeks a home.
4. Let us resolve to give Him a welcome, and make a home for Him in our hearts.

There is a word ever dear to our hearts, but dearer at this Christmas season than at any other time. Our hearts agree with the old saying, "There is no place like home." Home! what a charm, a fascination clings to that word. It does not matter whether it is a mansion or a cottage, so that it is our home. Childhood's affection nestles round our home, and it is the pride and comfort of venerable old age. And Christmas is the time of all others when our memory and thoughts gather round our home. We all go home in spirit or in glad reality at Christmas. And amidst all our pleasures and comforts we have a thought—a loving thought for those who are far away, whether distance or death separate us. We remember them all at Christmas. We miss their voices and their tender glances; we notice a vacant chair or a little token of the past. Perchance on coming to the Christmas Mass we may cast a wistful glance at the churchyard, where in their little home some dear one is at rest.

Just as it was nineteen hundred years ago, there will be gatherings of friends and happy hours spent in our

homes this Christmas-time. Yes, it was a busy and a festive time at Bethlehem, the little city of David, so many centuries ago. All the friends and kinsfolk of the place were gathered together for the taking of the census. By order of the Roman Emperor the people had to be counted, each in his native place, the old home of the family. So that all the people, rich and poor, had come from all parts, far and near, each to be enrolled in his own city. Each house was full and the inn crowded with these family gatherings.

But there were two poor travellers—oh, you know them well—who had journeyed in the winter-time all the way from Nazareth. And they had no home. No welcome was waiting for them. Doors were pitilessly closed against them as they humbly sought a shelter. And the gospel says: "There was no room for them in the inn." When the bleak night came on, Mary and Joseph sought refuge in a cave, which was used as a stable. There our Lord was born. "And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke ii. 7). The very One Who provided all those homes for others had no home Himself. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John i. 11).

As of old, so now, Christ Jesus our Lord is seeking a home. How many at this holy Christmas-time, taken up with the comforts and pleasures of the season, with their house full of friends,will treat Him like the Bethlehemites of old! How many will fail to recognize the wanderers, and, closing the door against them, will soon forget the cold and cheerless night without! There are those standing without, who indeed deserve a home. Joseph and Mary would bring Jesus to us, if we would

but let them. Oh, the bitter irony of this festive time! Why is it a festive time? Because of the birth of Christ. His blessed name and the name of holy Mass united—Christmas—is on every tongue. The world resounds with Christmas greetings, but to so many, so very many, there is not a thought of remembrance of Him.

So much for the world at large, but not, please God, as regards ourselves. Yet even amongst Catholics there are men who forget Christ at Christmas-time. We must redouble the fervour of our piety to make up for those who forget Him. Who is it that their hearts keep standing without, and refuse to bid Him enter, and give Him welcome? Is it a beggar? Yes, a beggar indeed! "He came into the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not!" Everything we have belongs to Him. He gave it us all. Where would be our home, if He had not given us our health and our livelihood, our happiness, our children, our very existence? And now He will not force us, but asks us, begs of us to give Him a home. And He that seeks a home is no stranger, but a kinsman and a brother. He made us His brethren. For the Son of God became man, that we poor men should become the sons of God. He came "to be in all things like His brethren" (Heb. ii. 17).

He deserves a welcome; and we can give Him one. He seeks a home, and we have one to offer Him—our heart. Do not let this holy time pass by without bidding Him enter and make it all His own. His coming was all for us. He came to atone for us; to give to our poor lives and daily actions an eternal reward. He came as an Infant to force us to love Him; to make it easy for us to remember Him; to take away all fear, and to

give us full confidence in His devoted love for us. Our hearts are unworthy of Him, but if they are all for Him, He will gladly make His home there. And Mary and Joseph will teach us how to serve Him and be faithful. Our hearts, for a little while now, to be His home, where His love will reign supreme; and then, so soon, our home will be with Him in the Kingdom of His glory.

First Sunday of the Year

THE MOST HOLY NAME JESUS

"His name was called Jesus."—Luke ii. 21.

1. Our help is in the name of the Lord: and help is what we need.
2. Our Lord is ready, able, and willing to help us.
3. When we should use this means of help.
4. The encouragement from the promises attached to this name.

This is the name of which the Scripture says, "Our help is in the name of the Lord." You remember how St. Peter boldly declared this to the princes of the people when he was examined about the miracle done to the infirm man. "Be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, Whom God hath raised from the dead, even by Him this man standeth before you whole. . . . For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts xii. 10-12).

Behold, here is our help, and help is just what we all need. All through life, and especially at the hour of death, we stand in need of help. The reason is plain. Of ourselves we cannot resist temptations and preserve our innocence, for we are weak, irresolute, and inclined to sin. Moreover, we have a bitter, crafty enemy ever plotting our eternal ruin. To be secure of our salvation we must have repeatedly help from heaven. Is it not, then, quite natural for us, if we have any faith,

in such necessity and peril to call upon our Blessed Saviour's sacred name—"Jesus, help us."

And how blessed are we with this firm hope and assurance that we have One always ready to listen to this cry for help. Can we picture a mother heedless of her child's cry when in deadly peril? How, then, can we for a moment doubt our Lord? And not only does He hearken to our cry, but as He is all-powerful He is able even miraculously to assist us. And His words, His assurances, the infinite love of His Sacred Heart bid us trust that He is willing, yea, yearning to help us. How many countless millions of times from saints' and sinners' hearts have the following prayers from the Psalms risen up to God: "Help us, O God, our Saviour; and for the glory of Thy name, O Lord, deliver us, and forgive us our sins for Thy name's sake" (Ps. lxxviii. 9). "Because he hath hoped in Me I will deliver him: I will protect him because he hath known My name" (Ps. xc. 14). And we read our Lord's repeated promise in St. John's gospel: "If you shall ask Me anything in My name, that I will do" (John xiv. 14).

When, then, and in what manner, should we make use of this blessed means of help? First and chiefly, we must use it during prayer. For what could fix our attention and turn our minds to God better than simply to utter the holy name Jesus? How often, alas! have we pronounced it irreverently and without a thought. But what a means to stir up our fervour it should be to us! It is this sacred name that gives the power to our prayers, for we learn from the holy custom of the Church to expect our prayers to be heard, to be answered "through Jesus Christ our Lord." And loving and using it so continually in our prayers,

it rises unbidden from our hearts in distress and peril. The one word is a prayer; its earnest invocation is enough, and succour and solace rain down upon our souls in answer. In temptation, above all, it is a safeguard to our souls. As soon as temptation is perceived, we must call upon the name of the Lord, at least in our hearts. No dallying or compromising with sinful allurements; let us prove that we are Christ's, and remember that " our help is in the name of the Lord." How many, happy in heaven now, proved victorious in the conflict by the use, the constant use, of this blessed means. Again, in our daily occupations, devout people constantly remember and invoke, at least mentally, this most acred name. It purifies our aims and intentions; it makes us draw back from danger; it gives new impulse and energy to the weary. His name reminds us of Him Who is our way and our life; and when we breathe His name He is near us to help our flagging footsteps along the narrow path to heaven, that He has trod before us. Let us be mindful of it, and it will " keep our minds and hearts in Christ Jesus " (Phil. iv. 7).

Let us firmly believe and cherish in our hearts the promise of God, with which He has endowed this name. It is the inspired word of the Almighty that gives us the assurance, " Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved " (Acts ii. 21).

Is it not, then, well worth our while—in fact, is it not most necessary for us—to acquire the habit of frequently and reverently using the holy name of Jesus ? Unless we learn the habit, that sacred name will not rise spontaneously to our lips, when we may so grievously need it. At the moment of a sudden death all might depend on that single cry for mercy—" Jesus, mercy."

If it were not kept lovingly in our hearts, how on the moment should it rise to our lips? As we live, so we die. Therefore love and trust and constant use of this sacred name in life assures us with a blessed hope that we shall die with that name of power and of Christ's love in our hearts and on our lips. And the Church makes that most holy name, Jesus, the compendium of all prayers for the dying. Even with our last sigh we may be able, please God, to breathe that tender name. And the last Blessing hovering over us only requires the one word "Jesus," and the Blessing descends upon us. "Our help is in the name of the Lord."

The First Sunday after Epiphany

THE HOLY WILL OF GOD

"The good, and the acceptable, and the perfect Will of God."—Rom. xii. 2.

1. By doing the Will of God, we do what the blessed do in heaven.
2. How do we know the Will of God?
3. The enemies of the Will of God.
4. Reward of doing it.

At the beginning of the year let us resolve, wisely and carefully, to choose the safe path to heaven, and with God's help to persevere in it. This safe path is to do the holy Will of God. In resolving to follow this path, we are attempting to do that which the blessed do in heaven, and for ever. "Thy Will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." God is so supreme that His Will is the law, the regulator, the perfection of all His creatures. "We pray for you," says St. Paul, "and beg that you may be filled with the knowledge of His Will . . . that you may walk worthy of God in all things pleasing" (Col. i. 9). Not only the saints prove the necessity of this, but even holiness itself was based upon doing the Will of God. Our Blessed Lord Himself said, "I came down from heaven, not to do My own Will, but the Will of Him that sent Me" (John vi. 37). And our Lady, "Be it done according to Thy word." "The Blessed Virgin was blessed," says St. Augustine, "because she did the Will of the Father."

But how do we know what is the Will of God? From His Commandments and the teaching of the Church, and by that monitor within us, our conscience. If we only bravely accept the Will of God, there will be no worry or doubt, no perplexity and anxiety, for God's Will is wisdom itself and must prevail. We must pray, then, that we may have the grace to recognize it, accept it, act up to it, adore it, and love it.

But it is our nature to find obeying irksome, and we are quick and clever at inventing excuses from doing the Will of God. It is self that is the enemy. Self that has free will, which opposes itself to the holy Will of God. Of our own nature, then, we are inclined to oppose; having sinned, the habit of opposition is strengthened; and through the malice and craft of the devil we shall be urged, unless we are watchful, into determined opposition to the Will of God. So it is by no means easy to do the Will of God on earth as the blessed do in heaven. We may mean it, intend it, resolve—and yet continually fall away.

Unless we had free will, we could not merit; but alas! if it rules us we shall be ruined. "Before man is life and death, good and evil, that which he shall choose shall be given him." "Behold I set before you the way of life, the way of death" (Jer. xxi. 8). Then, as we see that self uses its free will to oppose and thwart the Will of God, we must be on our guard, and fight against it. Our free will unchecked leads us to ruin; God's Will leads us to heaven. We must watch our hearts to see what awakens the evil of self. At first, if all goes well, it lies quiet, but passion may be roused by envy, uncharitableness, a slight, an unpleasant command, by the very dullness and monotony of life indeed; and then self-will is up in arms, and disregards—

yea, may boldly assert itself against—the Will of God. The devil is the instigator to fan the smouldering fire into a blaze.

This is the work of our life, and we must not be beguiled into believing anything else can take the place of doing the blessed Will of God. At first there is not open insubordination and rebellion against God's Will; but there is a quiet, crafty evil, that may not look very wrong, that starts the mischief, and that is tepidity. The sin of tepidity is the deliberate choosing in small matters to do our own will instead of the Will of God. Its beginnings are want of fervour, carefulness, and cheerful, prompt obedience. Our prayers, our duties are not omitted, but our heart is not in them. We do not miss Holy Mass, but we are late at it, and choose the shortest. We do not mean to give up our prayers, but by degrees they are hurried over, shortened, and often forgotten. God's grace is by degrees withdrawn from us; it is not wanted, or cared for, or asked for. Tepidity is an insult to the Almighty God, an offence to the Holy God, and ingratitude to the Good God. A sudden temptation, a dangerous occasion—then, alas! a catastrophe, a fall into mortal sin. Self-will had been unbridled, there was no check on it, and now suddenly it breaks loose, and revolts against its God.

We know from the past the danger of falling into sin; therefore let us cherish an abiding sorrow for all the past offences, and humbly pray to God that we may not relapse. Our safeguard will be to cling to the holy Will of God. It may seem hard to give up our own will always, but God's grace will make us brave and generous enough to attempt to do it. Think of the promise and reward to those that cling faithfully

to that divine Will. Begin the year by promising God to place Him foremost in our minds and hearts: to be generous to Him, Who has loved us, in spite of all our failings. And take courage—others have got to heaven by doing the Will of God, and the same Blessed Saviour will help you in your endeavours. And remember His promise: "He that doth the Will of My Father, Who is in heaven, he shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven" (Matt. vii. 21).

The Second Sunday after Epiphany

OUR LADY'S INTERCESSION

"And the Mother of Jesus was there."—JOHN ii. 2.

1. The incident of the marriage feast.
2. How like a Mother was Mary there.
3. The same loving Mother is she to us.
4. Her intercession for us cannot be refused by her divine Son.

A PLAIN, simple, but very consoling lesson is taught us in this gospel, for it reveals to us the thoughtful, tender kindness of one who is not only the Mother of Jesus, but our own blessed Mother too. Recall the incident. Our Blessed Lord has just called the Apostles. The day after our Lord had been baptized, John the Baptist, as the gospel tells us (John i. 36), saw Him walking, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God." And two of his disciples, who heard this, followed Jesus. St. Andrew was one of them, and he brought Peter to the Lord. And the following day he brought Philip, and he brought Nathaniel. And the third day there was a marriage at Cana of Galilee, "and the Mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus also was invited, and His disciples, to the marriage."

Our Lady was a simple guest there, but, whilst others were enjoying themselves, she, with that tender mother's heart of hers, was thinking of the comfort and happiness of others. She noticed that the wine was running short, and unbidden, uncalled for, just simply to prevent the confusion and shame of the bride and bridegroom,

she quietly tells Jesus that they have no wine. In spite of His remonstrance that His hour had not yet come, in spite of a seeming refusal, her simple request obtains the favour of His first public miracle. Unnoticed by the others, she quietly tells the waiters, "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye." "Jesus saith to them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them to the brim. And Jesus saith to them, Draw out now and carry to the chief steward of the feast. And they carried it. And when the chief steward had tasted the water made wine, and knew not whence it was, but the waiters knew, who had drawn the water; the chief steward called the bridegroom, and saith to him, Every man at first setteth forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, that which is worse. But thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him."

This was His Mother Mary's doing! It is this same loving Mother that we pray to so often! If, without a prayer, and just for kindness' sake, she obtained the working of this first great miracle, what will she not do for us? There was no need for her to have done it. She was not bound to do it. She was not asked to do it.

How, then, can she refuse us or "despise our petitions in our necessities," when she did this, unbidden, just to prevent shame and confusion to others? Our necessities are so great. It is a matter of life and death to us—eternal life, eternal death—that we should not give way to temptation, remain in sin, die in sin; can our Blessed Lady refuse to deliver us from such dangers? Even without our turning to her she is anxious for us; how much more, then, if we pray to her! If we cry to

her for help, to avoid sin, to repent, to give our hearts to God, to endeavour to persevere day after day, can our Mother turn a deaf ear to our supplications? Oh! Mary, Mother of the Saviour, remember thy kindness at Cana, and be to us the same loving Mother now. Your request was granted, although His hour had not yet come. Ever since He has been listening to you, and never yet refused you, for He wills that all grace should come to us through you, O blessed Mother.

What daily, hourly prayers should we offer to our Lady; what confidence and trust we should place in her love and her power! Obtain for us, blessed Mother of God, the grace always to turn to thee—like little children to their mother—in all anxieties, fears, and dangers.

"And the Mother of Jesus was there." Let us impress those words on our soul, and endeavour to make them true in our own regard at all times, day after day.

In life, oh! may Mary Mother be there. At Baptism, when we became children of God, our souls had Mary there then. And she remained with us during our childhood, till, perhaps at last, some sad day, we drove our Mother away by mortal sin. But when we had repented, and received Holy Communion, again the Mother of Jesus was with us. How patiently she remains with us, guarding us, helping us, as we battle with temptation, beginning again after failures, rising after little falls, doing our daily duties with a good intention. This is the way to holy perseverance, which we must endeavour to obtain with Mary our Mother's constant help.

And at death—the time of all for a mother to care for her child—oh! may the Mother of Jesus be there.

Then all the prayers of our lifetime will intercede for us; the good habits formed in life will come to our aid; in our hearts, when voice may fail, we shall call upon her to stay with us. How safe shall we be in the arms of our Mother, how blessed the end!

And when we stand before the Judge, please God, may "the Mother of Jesus be there." For the last time she will plead for us, and may it be her happy privilege then, "after this our exile is ended, to show us the blessed fruit of her womb, Jesus." Oh! that glorious, never-ending day of eternity in heaven, and —Mary the Mother of Jesus will be there.

The Third Sunday after Epiphany

THE GOOD WILL OF CHRIST

"I will."—MATT. viii. 3.

1. Christ's good Will exemplified.
2. Why so willing to help us? Because we are His by creation, His by redemption.
3. Remembrance of the good Will leads us to hope, repentance, and trustful confidence.

GOD'S Will is mercy. And twice in the gospel just read, we hear our Blessed Lord say, "I will," and immediately mercy followed. The leper besought Him, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." And Jesus, stretching forth His hand, touched him, saying, "I will, be thou made clean." And forthwith his leprosy was cleansed. Again, when the centurion related how his servant was sick of the palsy and grievously tormented, Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him."

Nothing can do our souls more good than to remember this ready Will of our Lord in showing mercy. The Book of Wisdom tells us the reason of this loving Will. "Thou sparest all, because they are Thine, O Lord, Who lovest souls" (xi. 4). How vile of us oftentimes, without a thought of gratitude, to take God's mercies as if they were our due! There are people who may even say, How does God show His good Will and spare us? Our life is hard enough; our pleasures few; our miseries and pains and afflictions frequent.

Are not such people a proof of our Lord's good Will?

They seek no mercy from Him, and yet He spares them. Do we not all provoke Him by our sins? Do not many remain careless and enthralled in bad habits for years, with no sorrow, or fear of God, or prayer on their lips? Yet the good Lord is waiting patiently for that prayer for forgiveness to be uttered, and then at once, as He answered the leper, He would say, "I will," and their soul would be cleansed.

But why, O Lord, is Thy good Will so patient and so ready to respond to the cry of a penitent heart? Because we "are Thine." Yes, God created us, and He hateth nothing that He has made. God is our Father, we are His children; though often, alas! ungrateful, disobedient, rebellious children. Yet the infinitely good Father loves us still, simply because we are His children.

Moreover, O Lord, we are Thine because Thou hast purchased us by Thy precious Blood. By our sins we have sold ourselves to the devil, we have become his slaves, but Thy good Will has paid the ransom for us. And this not once, but perhaps many and many a time, when we have relapsed all through our own fault, through not seeking help and strength from above. Looking at our past life, who can doubt the patient, loving good Will of Christ our Lord?

We may well wonder how it is; what is the secret of this bearing with us so long, and this readiness to forgive. God loves us. That is the secret of it all. God loves us, for what else could account for such long-suffering patience towards us in sinfulness, and such readiness to forgive, when the grace of contrition, which is His gift, moves us to repent? And what else could account for the multitude of His graces, and the generosity that knows no bounds?

Let us try to learn to bear this remembrance of the good Will of our Lord in our hearts. Nothing could do us more good. We should never then doubt or despair; we should have hope of forgiveness however great our sinfulness, however long we might have abandoned our religious duties. Remembering it, hope would burst forth into love and gratitude. A new life would spring up in our souls: devout prayer, repentance, attending Mass, receiving Holy Communion.

Once that we felt that our leprosy had been cleansed, that the grievous torment of the sickness of our soul had been relieved and cured, could we help but be as grateful as the leper of the gospel was? We can picture him afterwards following Christ with His disciples, one of the faithful ones. And the faith that should animate us to do our utmost for God should be like that of the centurion, which our Lord marvelled at and commended. He had not found so great faith in Israel.

One of the great evils of sin is to prevent us remembering the mercy of God; whereas the miracles of our Lord and Saviour's kindness recorded in the gospels force us to recall and tenderly to meditate on the love of that Sacred Heart which is waiting to work on our souls the same marvellous cures. To remember the mercies of the Lord is a great grace, and awakens in our hearts a trustful confidence in His goodness. It is the first step of the penitent sinner returning to His outraged Redeemer. It makes us loathe the evil we have done against Him; it brings us to His feet, praying for pardon. We come like the leper, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." And the same blessed answer is ready for us, "I will, be thou made clean." And we come forth from the confessional, filled with that

blessed confidence that He has spared us, because He loves us. And unworthy though we are, at His loving invitation we draw near to the altar, longing for the Bread of Life, and we hear that divine voice saying, "I will come and heal you," and strengthen you and guard you, and "he that eateth this Bread shall live for ever." May we persevere loyal and faithful to the end, and that end will soon come. Then may our dying prayer be, "Lord Jesus, receive my soul!" and we may trustfully hope that the blessed answer will be, "I will." "Thou sparest all, because they are Thine, O Lord, Who lovest souls."

The Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

TRUST IN JESUS

"Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith?"—MATT. viii. 26.

1. The incident in the gospel.
2. The rebuke meant for us all.
3. How often have we doubted the care of our Lord for us!
4. What we need is trust: the trust that pleases our Lord and brings a blessing.

IT was early in the public career of our divine Lord that the miracle narrated in to-day's gospel took place. After working a number of miracles on the Sabbath day, and very many more when the sun had gone down and crowds of infirm were brought to Him, our Lord "gave orders to pass over the water. . . . And when He entered the boat His disciples followed Him. And behold, a great tempest arose in the sea, so that the boat was covered with waves, but He was asleep. And they came to Him, and awaked Him, saying, Lord, save us, we perish." Poor disciples—how little they knew of Christ our Lord, to what we do! They had only, as yet, seen a few miracles worked, and yet in their danger they sought His help. They had faith that He might help them some way, but they were hurt and dismayed to see Him asleep. As St. Mark puts it, they cried to Him, "Master, doth it not concern Thee that we perish?" (Mark iv. 38).

And when our Lord arose, they were rebuked—gently, sorrowfully, it may be, as if His sacred Heart were hurt that they could doubt. "Why are ye fearful,

O ye of little faith? And He commanded the winds, and the sea, and there came a great calm."

That rebuke was meant for us. And how much more have we deserved it, when many a time we have doubted our good Lord's care for us! Hardships, troubles, sorrows, and afflictions have come upon us, and we have been hurt, and wondered: Had God forgotten us? Was He asleep, as in the boat? We see others, seemingly, so much happier, with less troubles and anxieties. Why should all the misery and hardships fall to our lot? We have often repined and murmured, and been tempted to think that God is treating us hardly or else has forgotten us.

If the disciples were rebuked, who knew so little of His solicitude, His power and His love; how deeply have we wounded His sacred Heart by doubting Him! Do we not know well, and should we not constantly bear in mind, all that our blessed Saviour has done and suffered for us? It is simply to force us to remember Him, and have recourse to Him, that He seems to leave us all alone in sorrows and temptations. He wants us to pray to Him, but not to doubt Him. The disciples appealed to Him at once, and behold a great calm. But have we not gone on—oh, for how long—disheartened, murmuring, and forgetting God? The remedy was close at hand. "Lord, save us, we perish." If we did perish, we should have deserved it, for it would have been all our own fault.

The loving care that God takes of us! and we take it all, often without a word of thanks, as if it were our due. And if, in His mercy, He lets some little trial or sorrow afflict us, we doubt His care, and think He has forgotten us. And He lets it happen to us to force us to think of Him.

What we need is trust in our blessed Saviour's goodness. And does He not deserve it? All the sorrows or hardships that happen us are sent in mercy, to remind us, to force us, to provoke us, we may say, to turn to Christ Jesus, our Lord. He wants us to realize that we are nothing, that we can do nothing without Him; and yet, that if we only ask Him and trust Him, there is nothing good for us that He will not do for us. That is the lesson we must learn above all others, if we wish to please Him, and merit all His loving graces and blessings. We have not the excuse of the disciples. They did not know that He could still the storm, for they cried in their amazement, "What manner of man is this, for the winds and the sea obey him!"

Ah! we have Him here in the tabernacle. We know Him, adore Him as our Lord and God. He created the world and is master of it. He redeemed the world; so our souls are precious in His sight, for He shed His precious Blood for them. He remains always with us, to be near us, waiting for our supplications and our prayers. And can we doubt Him? Oh! no wonder His Heart broke of grief on the Cross! Worse than His enemies' cruelties, He felt the doubts, the distrust, of those who know Him.

Let Him not have to say to us again, "Have you not faith yet?" Let us give Him the full trust of a loving heart. Lord, we accept everything that may happen to us, as from Thee, as sent in Thy love and mercy. How brave, how victorious we should be, if we only trusted in our good Lord. No power could hurt us then. There is no limit to the graces and blessings that He will bestow upon us, if we only confide and trust in Him. He worked a miracle in the boat, though He had to complain, "O ye of little faith." What

will He do for us, if we have great faith, complete loving trust in Him ?

St. Clara shows us what trust in our Lord can do. The Saracens were attacking Assisi where her convent was; and the inhabitants, dreading the havoc and slaughter if the town fell into the enemy's hands, came and besought St. Clara to assist them by her prayers. Though lying ill, she was borne in a litter, with the Blessed Sacrament before her, to the walls of the city. It was Clara's trust in her Saviour against an army ! And when the Saracens rushed to the assault, the Lord, that had been trusted in, struck the foremost with blindness. Dismay fell upon them, and the rest, leading their blinded comrades, fled in terror. Trust in Jesus will always vanquish every foe and bring peace and every blessing to our soul.

The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

A PURE INTENTION

" All whatsoever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."—Col. iii. 17.

1. Self the cause of failure.
2. A pure intention to do all for Christ blesses and ennobles all we do.
3. A little thing: fidelity needed.
4. The change it would work in us.
5. Examples of the saints.

How often in our life do we feel disappointed—yea, despondent—at finding so many of our good beginnings and endeavours turning out to be failures. Our confessions make this very evident to us. Do we not find that we have done the very things that we should not, and have omitted those that we should? It is not astonishing, for we are weak of purpose and prone to evil. Is it not very often because we thought that we of ourselves could do better; because it was self making the resolutions; self trying of its own powers to make its way to heaven? Whereas we should have obeyed St. Paul, " All whatsoever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."

A pure intention would have rectified so much and have saved us from many a failure. It is not what we do merely, but why we do it, that makes our lives—words and works—pleasing unto God. For instance, even munificent charities can be made valueless in the sight of God, if vainglory and seeking the applause

of men were the motives. On the other hand, even the widow's mite, given humbly, lovingly for Christ's sake, will find its eternal reward in heaven.

A moment's thought, the raising of our mind to God, the intending every word or work to be said and done in the name of Christ, for the love of Christ, would spiritualize our lives, and make of them an offering acceptable to God and blessed by Him with an eternal reward. And this pure intention, this morning offering, must be a daily work. We are so fickle, so inconstant, that even then self-love or yearning for praise will creep in. The fairest bud may have a canker in its heart.

No longer let our days be profitless for want of a little thought. With our morning prayers—yea, before them; as soon as our mind awakes—a moment's earnest thought will do—all for Jesus—and the day and all its thoughts, and prayers, and words, and works are offered to God and blessed by Him. "Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."

You may say that is a trifling thing indeed, and can that bless and ennoble our daily life? Yes, it is a little thing, but, as St. Francis of Sales says, "Little things are but little things, but fidelity in little things is a great thing." And the fidelity in making this pure intention, this offering to do all in the name of Jesus, and for the love of Jesus, is a great thing. For it is this being united to our Blessed Lord that gives its value, its eternal value, to all we do.

Let us picture to ourselves what this pure, heartfelt offering would mean. Sloth and tepidity would instantly stand abashed and ashamed. Sin and all desire for sin would be warned off, for our souls are giving themselves to Christ. The evil one would see

that his plans and intrigues were detected and thus rendered powerless. In a moment the bright thought of Mass, of Holy Communion, perchance, would irradiate our soul. Our thought would question—Have we time? Can we make time for them? What an offering indeed to our dear Lord if we can; yea, a pleasing offering indeed for only wishing that we could. The daily toil, whatever it may be—laborious, poorly paid, wearisome—also, offered humbly, without a murmur, according to the blessed Will of God. Recording Angels are busy throughout the day adding up the wages due to such a worker.

This offering, made morning after morning, simple as it may seem, is certain to be lovingly received by our Lord. That blessing gives the value to everything, and graces flow down and intensify the love of the offering and the purity of the intention. Gain the habit, persevere in it, and by degrees you will find yourself renewing it time after time in the day. Every prayer will end by repeating it; every fresh work remind you of it. And especially after some little fall—temper, impatience, uncharitableness, whatever it may be—at once, penitent but not disheartened, you will begin again more devoutly and trustfully than ever. Even a fall can help us to rise, through humility and sorrow, and receive fresh help and strength from God.

Yes, doing all with a pure intention for the love of Christ explains to us the mystery how the saints from such humble beginnings became so illustrious in their sanctity, and such models and encouragement to us all. It was because they were doing all for God that they were chosen from the lowliest employments and called to such noble work, in which they devoted their lives to the defence of the Church and the salvation of count-

less souls. For instance: St. Vincent of Paul, tending his father's cattle—a slave in Morocco—and yet to become the father and founder of the Mission Fathers, the Dames of the Cross, and the Sisters of Charity. Behold the humblest of beginnings and the greatest of achievements. And St. Peter Damian, abandoned by his mother, feeding his brother's swine, patient in ill-treatment and starvation—and afterwards a monk, a bishop, a cardinal, a trusted counsellor of Emperors and of Popes. And the shepherd, St. Pascal Baylon! Was it not his pure intention, his union with God in his lowly calling, that made him a saint? When he could not leave his flock and attend Holy Mass, his soul was at the church, rapt in adoration at the very tolling of the Mass bell. His devotion to the Blessed Sacrament has been honoured by the dignity conferred upon him by Pope Leo XIII., as "special and heavenly patron of all Eucharistic Confraternities." Yes, "little things are but little things," and the morning offering, and the pure intention of doing all for love of Jesus, is a little thing, but fidelity to it is a great thing. "All whatsoever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."

The Sixth Sunday after Epiphany

EXAMPLE OF OUR BLESSED LADY

"Which is indeed the least of all seeds."—MATT. xiii. 32.

1. Parable of encouragement.
2. Take example of our Blessed Lady: the least of all in her life.
3. What did she become? "Shall call me blessed."
4. Her position in the doctrine and her power in the devotions of the Church.

THIS parable of our Blessed Lord is meant for our encouragement. It teaches us that great results can spring from small beginnings. It teaches us that what the world sees is very, very different from what appears before the eyes of God. Humility, purity, obedience, patience are but of small account in the estimation of the world; but they are prized by the all-holy God, and great and wonderful are their results.

How plainly we realize all this, if we study it from an example—the example of our Immaculate Mother Mary herself. Contrast her life in this world, and her dignity, glory, and power, with which she is supremely blessed by God, now and for ever.

Picture, first, the humble house at Nazareth; the Virgin praying; the appearance and message of the Angel Gabriel; and her humility troubled at his saying. And when she had realized the tidings that he had brought, her meek and lowly answer, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word" (Luke i. 38). No complacency, no exal-

tation at the dignity conferred upon her! Chosen to be the Mother of the Saviour, she only said, "Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid" (*ibid.* 48).

And at Bethlehem—still the least of all seeds—" she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them at the inn" (Luke ii. 7). And outcasts again were the Child and His Mother, for the Angel warned St. Joseph to flee with them to Egypt for fear of King Herod. And the long years at Nazareth, where the child grew up—how poor, secluded, uneventful were they. How despised a life in the eyes of the world, for when her Son began His public life, was it not cast against Him, "Can anything of good come from Nazareth?" (John i. 46).

Come to Calvary! Behold that poor, heartbroken Mother standing by the Cross on which her Son died, scoffed at, derided, blasphemed by those for whom He died. Well may unbelievers sneer at such an apparent failure—the life of the Virgin Mother and the death of her Son! But we—thank God for the faith within us—deny the failure and humbly adore God's marvellous providence. The seed must die in the ground before the growth ensues. Yes, Mary was "the least of all seeds," indeed, but we see and believe and bless God for the result of her humility, her acceptance of the Will of God, her hidden life, her poverty, her sufferings. Behold the result! Immaculate Mary herself tells us, "Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. Because He that is mighty hath done great things to me" (Luke i. 48, 49).

This poor, unknown, sorrowful Virgin—what has she become? The Queen of heaven, the Queen of Angels

and of Saints! Acknowledged, reverenced from the earliest ages of the Church with a love and devotion increasing as the centuries roll on. A new era began for her at the Resurrection of her divine Son. Then did she realize, as He appeared to her, glorious, impassible, and immortal, what it was indeed to be the Mother of the Saviour, for this was the Child of Bethlehem, this the Victim of Calvary. And at the Ascension what a vision of the glory of heaven was revealed to her longing soul! Ten days after, when the Holy Ghost came down upon the Apostles and filled their souls with His marvellous gifts, even Mary's heart was enlarged, she realized that a new work was laid upon her—she became the Mother of the infant Church. For twelve years she remained with the disciples, a living answer to all who doubted that God had become man to redeem the world—for there still amongst them was found His Mother. From the earliest days there were self-opinionated men holding heretical doctrines, but one after another they failed and perished as true belief in Mary was taught and maintained by the successors of the Apostles. The powers of the wicked one, having ensnared the hearts of so many, were concentrated against our Blessed Lady. But the prophecy of old was verified, and the Virgin Mother "crushed the serpent's head" when, in the days of St. Cyril of Alexandria, at the General Council of Ephesus, it was declared as an article of faith that Mary was the Mother of God. The least, indeed, of all seeds had grown and become glorious in its triumph. The title "Mother of God" was the test of orthodoxy.

Not only did Mary become the test and strength of our faith, but hope in her, as the mediator with her divine Son, enkindled piety and devotion to her.

Through succeeding ages the institution of festivals in her honour; the building of churches dedicated to her name; religious orders choosing her as their special patroness; the multiplication of devotions to win her compassion and her intercession—all these are the proofs of the glory of the Virgin of Nazareth.

Moreover, unlike the empires of this world that rise and fall, that for a space make the world resound with their prowess and their glory, and then pass away into oblivion, leaving scarce a shadow of a name behind—Mary's glory knows no decline! All these centuries has it existed, and now in our own age, in spite of all the evil and infidelity in the world, there is more widespread devotion, more public veneration, than ever. Proofs of this are plain. For witness, "the months of Mary," "the October Rosaries," the confraternities, the processions, the pilgrimages to Lourdes, the miracles that silence the tongue of slander. The whole world is the witness of these glories of Mary. Faith and hope are strengthened by remembering this example of the Mother of God. Let us devoutly ask of her to make us meek and humble of heart; to imitate now her poor and lowly life on earth, trusting that our Mother will welcome us to heaven and its glory hereafter.

Septuagesima

A WARNING AND AN ENCOURAGEMENT

"So shall the last be first, and the first last."—MATT. xx. 16.

1. These words repeated on three occasions.
2. Why? To warn us against relaxing our endeavours.
3. To encourage us that it is never too late to turn to God.
4. Examples.

THESE words of our Blessed Lord seem strange, and to ordinary good people hard and almost unjust. To work all day or all life, and after all the last to come to be preferred. But infinite wisdom spoke these words, and infinite mercy meant them for our instruction and warning. And on two other occasions our Blessed Lord uttered these same words. The preceding chapter of St. Matthew concludes thus: "And many that are first shall be the last" (xix. 30). Our Saviour had just warned His disciples against the dangers of riches, "a rich man shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of heaven." And St. Peter had cried out, "Behold, we have left all things and have followed Thee." Commendation and the promise of eternal life was the divine answer; then followed, "And many that are first shall be last, and the last first." Again a third time we meet these words in answer to the question: "Lord, are they few that are saved?" (Luke xiii. 23). Remember that solemn answer of our divine Lord, "Strive to enter by the narrow gate; for many, I say to you, shall seek to enter, and shall not be able. . . .

And behold, they are last that shall be first, and they are first that shall be last" (*ibid.* xxiv. 30).

Let us, then, strive to understand these solemn words of warning. Why were they spoken and repeated? First, to warn good people not to be complacent and self-satisfied; not to relax in their endeavours, striving for heaven. They must not take credit to themselves that they have been, perhaps for years and years, in the service of God. It is God's grace that they have been so. They must not rely on what they have done, but must still press forward and do their utmost. In St. John's Revelation we have examples how this may happen. Surely we may class the seven Bishops to whom he was commissioned to write by our Lord Himself as amongst the first that were called, earnest and zealous once; and yet what were the messages that were sent to them? (Apoc. ii. and iii.). "Behold, thou hast left thy first charity. . . . Thou hast the name of being alive and art dead. I find not thy works full before God." And to another: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. But because thou art lukewarm . . . I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth. . . . Thou knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. Be zealous and do penance." These rebukes should strike our own consciences. Are we not perilously like them in many respects? The danger, then, is that, though we have been first, we may be last, and strive in vain to enter by the narrow gate.

Now, on the other hand, let us see how our Blessed Lord spoke these words, not as denouncing, but as encouraging: "the last shall be first." He spoke them in defence of those who had been idle because no man had hired them, or had only worked the last hour. He

spoke them in commendation of those who were really striving to enter by the narrow gate. They were meant for the poor, the unknown, the sinful, the outcasts, to fill their hearts with hope and manly resolution to respond to the call and do their utmost for their Saviour. They were meant for Matthew, the tax-gatherer, who, rising up, left all things, followed Him, and became an Apostle, and who wrote these very words of the Gospel with a grateful heart. They were meant for Zacheus, "the chief of the publicans," but who sought to see Jesus, and as a reward the loving Lord said, "This day is salvation come to this house . . . for the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke xix. 2).

There was another that was the last—yea, beyond the last, an outcast—poor Mary Magdalene! Was she not buoyed up with hope and courage that the last might yet be first? She broke with her sinful life, she braved the scorn of the Pharisees; she was permitted to kiss His sacred feet and to hear His divine words of pardon. With Mary the Immaculate, she was faithful at the Cross of Calvary! And yet another was called at the very last. One short prayer, and he was blessed and promised the entrance to the Kingdom. The last to believe, the first to be rewarded: the good thief beside the dying Saviour.

Thus are we taught, so that there can be no room for doubt or fear, that these words were meant for poor sinners as long as the world shall last. They were meant to lift up their hearts, to encourage them, to strengthen them. God's grace is never wanting. Now is never too late to turn to the good God, Who wills not the death of a sinner but that he should be converted and live.

The lesson to be learnt to-day is plain and yet so vital. The good must not relax in their devout efforts; must not be content and think that the past will surely save them; there is still the present in which to be strenuous; the future—perhaps a very brief one—wherein may lurk temptations, carelessness, a fall, a ruin. If we are now amongst the first, let us strive to keep with them and not lag behind.

And the lesson for the careless, the negligent, the disobedient to God's Church, is this: let them not put off for a day, but turn to God humbly, contritely, resolutely. Though they may be the last, let them set out with hurrying endeavour, and strive to overtake the first. What everlasting joy will be theirs, when they hear the welcome as they enter the Kingdom of God, " the last shall be first."

Sexagesima

READINESS OF HEART

"A good and perfect heart."—Luke viii. 15.

1. Our Blessed Lord Himself explains the parable.
2. One thing necessary for us, to have "a good and perfect heart."
3. That is, our heart must be made ready to respond and obey.
4. Prayer, doing God's Will, patience are the means to ensure the harvest.

Our Blessed Lord Himself explains the gospel. The seed is the word, the faith, the grace of God; and we understand that He Himself is the sower. Undismayed by the knowledge that so many would receive the seed, and yet that failure would be the only result, the divine Sower persevered bravely in His work. It is not the forecasting or experience of men that tells us of the widespread failure, but Christ Himself it is that testifies that so many—three out of four—classes of men receive the word of God and yield no fruit.

He tells us of the wayside, where the seed was trampled on, and the birds of the air devoured it; He tells us of the rock, and how the seed, being sprung up, withered away for want of moisture. He tells us of the thorns, that growing up choked it. All the hopes of the harvest depended on that seed that fell upon the good ground, that would yield forth fruit a hundredfold. Let us treasure these last blessed words: "But that on the good ground are they, who in a good

and perfect heart, hearing the word of God, keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience."

This is the all-important matter, for us to have a good and perfect heart. First, then, what is meant by this? A heart where God is Master; a heart ready to obey and respond to His divine Will. The heart, like the ground, to be in good tilth, must be ploughed and harrowed, by self-discipline, by care, by nourishment. Secondly, a heart from which the world is banished. The thorns, as our Lord explained, were the "cares and riches and pleasures of this life." These thorns have to be cut down and uprooted. This is no easy task, for briars and thorns will spring up again, and it is continuous work, year after year, to keep them down; and so it is with our heart. The world does not take one refusal, one denial for an answer, but, insidiously, cares, desire of riches, pleasures steal back into our hearts; and the growth of the seed of faith, of grace, of the service of God is ruined.

And thirdly, a good and ready heart is one from which the devil is kept at a distance, otherwise he cometh, as the gospel says, "and taketh the word out of their heart, lest believing they should be saved." The crafty enemy tries dissipation of mind; suggestions of evil; sneers at authority; the spirit of unbelief and disobedience—against these the good heart must be on its guard.

This, then, is the readiness, the preparation, which makes the good and perfect heart, that is required. Then let us try and learn to ensure our having such a heart. This must be our aim, our endeavour, our life-long prayer. A good and perfect heart! A readiness, a willingness, a desire to do all that is required to gain it and maintain it is what we need, so that we may truly

say, "My heart is ready, O Lord, my heart is ready" (Ps. cvii. 1): to face the labour, not to be afraid of it; not to shirk it. It is a lifelong task that we are called upon to face, for our enemies—the world and self and the devil—cannot be routed and crushed once and for all. Constant watchfulness, a ceaseless struggle are demanded of us. This is far beyond our own powers; but we must have trust in God. Learn from a grain of corn. How long it lies in the chilled and wintry earth; yet it shoots forth its tender blade, piercing the sodden soil, and braving the frost and snows and biting winds that threaten its fragile life. But far more life has the grace of God; He will guard it and cherish it, if we are ready and willing and brave to do our best.

And we have means to help our heart to bring forth fruit—means given us by God. Prayer, the blessed gift of humble, constant prayer, will bring down the dew from heaven, the gentle rain of grace, and give life and growth to our endeavours. To our prayers is needed patience: our Lord's own word, "and bring forth fruit in patience": our prayers, our readiness to do, our aims must be strengthened and made able to endure and persevere by patience "which hath a perfect work." Poor weak human nature often murmurs and complains, how long? how often? How long has unfulfilled hope to endure? Till the blessing is given and the hope becomes joy attained! How often have we to pray? As often as poor creatures need God's pardon or assistance. Look forward to the harvest, and hope will renew our patience.

If our heart is ready to respond, God's help is never wanting. Our heart must be ready to accept and to do His Will, whatever it may be. The heart that is ready trusts in this word, "Delight in the Lord, and He

will give thee the request of thy heart " (Ps. xxxvi. 4). So in sunshine or showers, wintry blasts and snows, or the heat of summer—anything is acceptable, for our heart relies on God, in peace and joy, and He will give the increase. Our heart keeps willing and brave by remembering the harvest-time. We may be humbly afraid that we shall never in our lifetime be able to produce anything that even the good God could call a harvest. It is all His goodness. He sows the seed; He gives the life to it; He can see it grow, though we may not. It is He that brings it to perfection, and then He blesses His own good work—for it is all His doing—because our heart was ready, and He has made " the good and perfect heart bring forth fruit a hundredfold."

Quinquagesima

REPENTANCE

"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me."—Luke xviii. 38.

1. To repent, God's mercy is needed.
2. Sin, in regard of ourselves; of God; of our eternal welfare.
3. God willing and ready to forgive.
4. Our gratitude for forgiveness.

The holy time of Lent, upon which we enter this week, is given us once again by the mercy of God, in which to repent and put our souls in order. No one can afford, can dare to despise this fresh opportunity of having their sins forgiven. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John i. 8).

Then in what does repentance of sin consist? A thorough change of heart, by which we turn from our sins and break with them: confess them with true contrition of heart for having committed them. But can we ourselves do this? Can we shake ourselves free from the bonds of sin? Can we, the slaves of sin, gain liberty for our souls of our own power? No, we need the grace of God; hence our earnest prayer should be, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me."

If the blind, the lepers, all the poor sufferers were so earnest in seeking a cure, a freedom from their afflictions, and were mercifully healed by our Blessed Lord, how much more earnest should we be in seeking forgiveness of our sins! For sin is the leprosy of the

soul; sin blinds us and leads us astray from the path to heaven; sin is the palsy that paralyses all our powers. Mortal sin, alas ! is the death of our soul, the forfeiture of eternal life, the condemnation to eternal misery. All this is sin; for we are the slaves of that in which we have sinned.

And what is sin as regards Almighty God ? A defiance, a rebellion, an insult and ingratitude of the vilest kind. By sin we dare to disobey the Almighty Master; by sin we insult the all-holy God, by preferring vile things to Him, by choosing the indulgence of our passions to doing His holy Will. By sin we ignore and despise all that an infinitely loving Father has done for us.

He has given us an immortal soul, destined to be happy with Him for ever, and we sell this soul for a paltry or shameful pleasure. He has pardoned us so many times, and we have added iniquity to iniquity by returning to our evil ways. And that pardon, that our heavenly Father has granted so often—what was the price of it ? What was the ransom that was paid to rescue us from the thraldom of the devil ? The precious Blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who died on the Cross for us.

Alas ! in the past when we have sinned we thought little of the dreadful evil of our sins. Yet, without exaggeration sin is this appalling evil, the calamity with eternal consequences for our poor soul. How the tempter has fooled us and ruined us time after time ! When we gave way to our passions—jealousy, pride, avarice, impurity—he skilfully hid the malice from us. When we disobeyed the commandments of God and the Church, we did not realize the cruel contempt and ingratitude towards our divine Lord.

Then let us treasure this opportunity of repentance during the sacred time of Lent; let the prayer of our heart—earnest and constant—be, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." But can it be that God will hear our prayer and grant us forgiveness after all our falls, our relapses, perhaps our long continuance in sin? So many times have we made half-repentances and fallen again with scarce a struggle against temptation. Is not the patience of God worn out? Will He trust us and try us once again? In this anxiety and doubt, how consoling for us to recall the words of Scripture—God's own inspired words—"Hear me, O Lord, for Thy mercy is kind," says the Psalmist, "look upon me, O Lord, according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies" (Ps. lxviii. 17). "Thus saith the Lord: Be converted to Me with all your heart . . . turn to the Lord, your God, for He is gracious and merciful, patient and rich in mercy" (Joel ii. 12).

Surely, then, with all confidence we may trust in the mercy of our heavenly Father! It is He Who turns our hearts to wish to repent. It is He Who prompts the prayer to our Saviour, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." And that mercy will be poured down upon us to enlighten us to see our sins; to have the good will and the courage to break with them; to confess them; to have loving and sincere sorrow and compunction of heart for having committed them.

Finally, what gratitude should fill our hearts that we have so forgiving, so tender a Father: "Who forgiveth all thy iniquities, Who healeth all thy diseases, Who redeemeth thy life from destruction, Who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion" (Ps. cii. 3, 4). "For thou, O Lord, art sweet and mild, and plenteous in mercy to all who call upon Thee. . . . Thou, O

Lord, art a God of compassion, and merciful, patient, and of much mercy and true" (Ps. lxxxv. 5, 15). This is the Father, rejoicing when He hears our prayer for mercy, blessing the poor sinful heart resolving to come and ask for pardon.

This is the holy work of Lent. This blessed work of repentance has peopled heaven! Pray to that multitude of redeemed and glorious souls who have prayed the same prayer for mercy; who have received the same grace of contrition and absolution; who can look back to some Lent when they turned to God with all their hearts. They persevered faithfully, and may we do the same in the service of that good God "Who is gracious and merciful, patient and rich in mercy."

First Sunday of Lent

HELP IN TEMPTATION

"Behold angels came and ministered to Him."—Matt. iv. 16.

1. We are sure to be tempted.
2. We forget to cry for help.
3. Our Lord suffered Himself to be tempted for our instruction and encouragement.
4. Angels ready and faithful to assist us.
5. Let us imitate St. Antony's defence.

The gospel tells us to-day how our divine Lord suffered Himself to be tempted by the devil. It was for our sakes that He did so. Each one of us, that we may be worthy to win heaven, must be tried, and assaulted, and pass through the conflict. We must face this fact—we shall be tempted by the devil. It is not within anyone's power to escape temptation. The misery of it may wellnigh overwhelm us. Our self-love will be crushed, for we did not think that we were so vile as the spectres of temptations around us would make us think. We find oftentimes that, when we have resolved to do our best, temptations are the most importunate. Yes, it is true, we are tempted by the devil.

In our misery, when thus tempted and tried, how often do we make a great mistake. We have not the sense of children. In fear and danger, children cry for help: we forget! There is One near us, with His angels, ready to minister to us; only waiting to be

invoked, " Lord, save us, or we perish." " Wherefore it behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might become a merciful and faithful high-priest before God, that He might be a propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that, wherein He Himself hath suffered and been tempted, He is able to succour them also that are tempted " (Heb. ii. 17, 18). " For we have not a high-priest Who cannot have compassion on our infirmities; but One tempted in all things as we are, without sin " (Heb. iv. 15).

Our Blessed Lord accepted the ministration of angels after His temptation to teach us that we are not alone in our misery and our danger. To be tempted is not a sin; but to trust to ourselves to be able to resist and overcome is presumptuous. Pride goeth before a fall. To come out of the conflict unscathed needs help, and help is at hand if we humbly invoke it. The angels are our guardians to assist us in our struggle with their fallen brethren. If the fallen angels hate us because we are Christ's, the good angels are anxious to shield us from evil and ruin for that very same reason. A prayer can summon them to the rescue. To forget their assistance, to venture to stand alone and defend ourselves single-handed from evil, is to imperil our souls. We are bound to pray for help in grave temptation. To fall into sin is our own fault; always our own fault. We could have been saved from the sin, if we had prayed for assistance. The angels are with us wherever we go through life; in every occurrence, in every danger they are at hand. Our passage through the temptations of life is not a forlorn hope; we have our leaders, our friends, our guardians around us. But alas! how often are they forgotten and ignored. Temptations seduce us. Care-

less souls even love the danger; foolishly disregarding the imminent and eternal consequences.

With what an occupation have the ministering angels been entrusted by God! They first have to arouse us to be afraid of evil; to wish to escape it. Instead of fearing sin, we turn a deaf ear to the remonstrances which the angels prompt our consciences to urge upon us. We are reluctant to turn from the evil suggestion; the wicked companion; the occasions that we know will be our ruin. It is not that the angels are remiss in their endeavours; it is all our own fault yielding to our sinful desires, clinging to bad habits that will be our eternal ruin.

Pray that the angels may not grow weary of us, and that their divine Master may not recall them from their rejected ministrations. How faithful they have been to us! They are interested in us and devoted to us, because we are destined to be their brethren for all eternity. They rejoice over every soul they can save, for each one is another soul redeemed by the precious Blood of our Lord, and rescued from eternal loss.

This life is a time of trial and temptation; but to be forewarned is to be forearmed. We must not cowardly give way, though we have to face the combat, for we are not alone. Remember we can instantly summon assistance. Imitate the great St. Antony, the model of those who are tempted. He tells us that his weapons were the sign of the holy Cross and the most holy name of Jesus. That sacred name, that blessed sign, would bring us instant help. "God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able" (1 Cor. x. 13). He will send His angels to defend you, to drive away the enemies of your soul. Tempta-

tions would be robbed of their terror, they would be vanquished, if we only remembered to invoke and trust. We must learn this lesson in life—the lesson to remember and pray; for as death approaches, temptations may be more powerful and deadly. The good habit of prayer will then spring to our rescue. The angels will redouble their vigilance. Not only our own prayers, but the prayers of the Church for the dying will be our safeguard. The priest before he anoints us bids the evil spirits to be banished, and the angel of peace to stand by us; and he prays the Almighty Father to send His holy angel from heaven to guard and protect and defend. Happy indeed will be the death of one who has trusted in the angels in the days of his warfare. He will have endured temptation bravely; his fidelity will have been proved, and his consolation then will be that the angels will come forth to meet him, and bear his soul to receive the crown of life.

Second Sunday of Lent

DUTIES OF LENT

"God hath called us . . . unto sanctification in Christ Jesus our Lord."—1 THESS. iv. 7.

1. Our sanctification the work of Lent.
2. The means: Fasting, self-restraint.
3. Almsgiving: Christ's poor alive and dead.
4. Prayer: the direct and most important means.

OUR heavenly Father has granted us to start another Lent, during which "let us amend and do better for those things in which we have sinned through ignorance; lest suddenly prevented by the day of death, we seek time for penance, and be not able to find it." And the means by which we can amend and do better are plainly set before us during Lent. Each of us knows them; and each of us, if he followed his selfish inclinations, would fain find excuse not to use them. Fasting, almsdeeds, and prayer are not duties that human nature welcomes. But these are the means unto sanctification to which we are called.

There are so many reasons and excuses found for the non-observance of fasting, that very few are found to take any heed of the obligation. But the necessity of doing penance is still urgent upon us. And if we cannot endure the hardships that our forefathers bore humbly and penitently—are we less sinful, less prone to evil, have we less to make atonement for than they had? And is there no means of doing penance other than depriving ourselves of food? Is all that we drink

as necessary to sustain us as meat and bread? Would it not be real fasting to do without some of our pleasures and pastimes, cards, theatres, and the rest? Let us try the Rosary and attendance at the Stations of the Cross for a change. We may be unwilling, granted; but otherwise how shall we answer to God that we used the means to our sanctification?

Self also is ready with excuses when there is mention of almsdeeds. "Charity begins at home," and other well-known pleas immediately find utterance. But we are called unto sanctification, and not slavishly to obey the dictates of selfishness. The Holy Scriptures tell us: "Give alms out of thy substance, and turn not away thy face from any poor person; for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee. . . . For alms deliver from all sin and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness. Alms shall be a great confidence before the most high God, to all them that give it" (Tobias iv. 7, 12). And did not our Blessed Lord Himself note and commend the widow's mite, for He sees and blesses the good intention of the kindly heart. Remember His words: "Give, and it shall be given to you, good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over shall they give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured unto you again" (Luke vi. 38).

It may seem most unlikely to us that we shall ever need the alms of others; and it may be so in this life, but the day will come that we shall be needy and poor. When our soul, friendless and alone, shall be imprisoned in purgatory till the last farthing be paid, that is the hour when with bitter regret we shall bewail our selfishness in neglecting the poor and needy, and

especially the souls of the faithful departed. "Take pity on me, at least you my friends!" Yes; but how seldom did we heed that cry from others amidst the pleasures and occupations of our life on earth! Prayers, a holy Communion, a Mass offered for the departed—what a blessing they will prove to us hereafter! "Give, and it shall be given to you."

The Lenten duties that we have considered—viz., fasting and almsdeeds—have reference to ourselves and our neighbours; the third great duty—prayer—refers directly to God. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all He hath done for thee; Who forgiveth all thy iniquities, Who redeemeth thy life from destruction, Who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion" (Ps. cii. 2, 4). To use this greatest means of our sanctification, as it should be done, not so many more prayers are needed—though in Lent there should be an increase—as an intensifying of our devotion during prayer. We must throw our hearts into our prayers. We must remember Whom we are addressing.

Lowly adoration of our heavenly Father, our Creator, with an ardent offering of ourselves to do His blessed Will, and thus inherit the Kingdom of heaven, should commence our prayer. And that our prayers may be acceptable, "our sins should be always before us," that He may fill our hearts with true sorrow, for "a humble and contrite heart" God will not despise. Then, lest we should fall away again, let us pray for help and strength. God loves thus to be implored, and He is our hope and strength in all our necessities.

There is another part of prayer in which we are often wanting—thanksgiving. Our Father loves to be thanked. Thanksgiving is the work of the angels, their

eternal and blessed occupation. And we poor sinners are permitted to join our voices with theirs to praise and glorify and thank the good God. St. John the Evangelist, when blessed with a vision of heaven, heard the angels cry out, "Glory and honour and benediction! Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honour and power, because Thou hast created all things, and for Thy Will they were and have been created" (Apoc. iv.). Should our prayers aspire to this? Yes, in very deed, we can thank and glorify God in union with the prayers of Mary Immaculate and the very prayers of the Sacred Heart of our Lord Himself. For we are "called unto sanctification in Christ Jesus our Lord."

These are the means by which we can sanctify Lent —prayer, fasting, and almsdeeds. We have need to make good use of this holy time. It is a duty, and an imperative duty. And how consoling it will be to us, when we come to die—perhaps before the next Lent—that we have made good use of this holy time.

Third Sunday of Lent

THE SHAME THAT LEADS TO SORROW

"Yea, rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it."—Luke xi. 28.

1. The noble calling to hear and keep the word of God.
2. To our shame, we have often neglected both hearing and keeping it.
3. The shame of having preferred sin and the friendship of the devil to keeping the word of God.

We cannot help but be amazed when we hear these words of our Blessed Lord. Can anyone be more blessed than His own Immaculate Mother? No; but her greater blessedness was not simply in being His Mother, but being His worthy Mother. "Yea, rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it."

This leads us to think, what a noble calling is ours to hear the word of God and keep it. What blessedness should be ours if we had done so; but if we have not done so, what shame and confusion. Where is the blessedness in our careless, negligent, and sinful lives?

Let us look into our souls, and shame will force us to be humble and obtain forgiveness. Hear the word of God! How many a time has the hearing of the word of God been distasteful to us, and we have shirked the opportunity of listening to it. A short, early Mass to avoid a sermon; no prayer-book with us to whisper a word of God, rather distractions rioting in our minds, our thoughts engrossed with all manner

of memories and desires, but with no remembrance of any word of God. Spiritual reading! oh, that is left for nuns and priests! Newspapers, novels, ah! yes; our minds are enticed by something else than the word of God. Even if time hangs heavy on our hands, there is no desire to listen to that. That word which should steady our minds, give us pause to think whither all this foolish dissipation of mind will lead us. That word that should nerve us to resolve to do better and give ourselves to obeying God. That word which should give us courage, based on the promises of God, to do our best. With what shame do we find our souls overwhelmed by our sinful neglect in hearing the word of God.

But looking back, perhaps there was a time when we heard the word of God and loved to hear it. Words that lived in our souls when we were young, and which conscience will not let die, and makes them re-echo in times of temptation and sinfulness. Certain it is that we have all heard more than we have kept. That, indeed, is the important, the all-important, part. To have heard and not to have kept! "O Lord, Thou knowest my reproach, my confusion, and my shame" (Ps. lxix. 10).

It is when we examine why we have not kept the word of God that we realize our shame. Why did we not? Because we loved and preferred to be careless and negligent, and even sinful. Yes, we have not kept the word of God because of our sins. When we look back and see the worthlessness of our sins, it is then that we are covered with shame and confusion. What good have they ever done for us, or will do for us? And yet we have preferred them to keeping the word of God. That would have made us blessed; our sins

have brought nothing on us but shame; even in remembering them we are ashamed, but how much more, terribly more, when we shall stand in judgment for those sins; when the words of the prophet come true, and the Judge shall say: " I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, that will never be forgotten " (Jer. xxxiii. 40).

And instead of keeping the word of God, we find, on reflecting, that we have given ear to the whispers of the devil. Though we knew in our hearts that he was the father of lies, yet we listened to his seducing temptations, we gave half credence to his boasts of making us free and letting us do what we liked. Yes, in actual fact, we have preferred the mock friendship of the devil to being the faithful ones and blessed ones for keeping the word of God.

The shame of it ! for we have despised and rejected the friendship and the love of God. We are the children of God—the good God, our Creator, our Father, Who has endowed us with immortal souls, Who has at Baptism enrolled our names in the Book of Life, Who has given us Himself in the Blessed Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, Who Himself wishes to be our eternal reward in the Kingdom of His glory. We have despised this good God in not keeping His blessed word, but preferring to sin and live in sin. We are those of whom it is said, " Whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things " (Phil. iii. 19).

Let us change our hearts and be ashamed of what we have done—preferring sinfulness, the friendship of the devil, to the blessedness of keeping the word of God. To be thus ashamed is a grace from God. It is the beginning of humility, of sorrow, of true repentance. This shame for the wasted past will nerve us to begin

now to be in earnest, not to allow Lent to pass by carelessly. This holy shame will make us banish dissipation of mind, the love of vain and earthly pleasures, and turn our hearts all to God. This shame will fill our hearts with holy resolve and courage. We are poor indeed in God's sight, for there is nothing but shame to clothe our souls as we kneel before Him. But God is not only good, not only powerful, but God is merciful. And when He beholds our hearts grieving in shame over our wasted life, His mercy will bless that shame into repentance, and a contrite and humble heart God will not despise.

Fourth Sunday of Lent

THE TRUE MANNA, THE BREAD OF LIFE

" This is of a truth the prophet that is to come into the world."—JOHN vi. 14.

1. The tradition about the Messias.
2. Review of the miracle.
3. Contrast the Manna and the Holy Eucharist.
4. As of old, so many now leave our Blessed Lord.

THERE existed amongst the Jews a tradition, that, when the Messias came, He should be known and recognized by a miracle that should surpass even those of Moses, their leader and their hero. And amongst the miracles that Moses had wrought, the manna from heaven was reverenced as supreme. If we bear this in mind, we can see that the miracle of our divine Lord, in multiplying the five loaves to feed the five thousand men, was a bold and distinct challenge that they should be struck, remember, and recognize Him as the Messias. " This is of a truth the prophet that is to come into the world."

The manna had unfailingly rained down from heaven to feed the multitude in the desert for forty years. And in this chapter of St. John's gospel we read how the crowd had followed our Saviour, " because they saw the miracles which He did on them that were diseased." Jesus went up into a mountain, and when He saw the multitude that followed Him, He said to Philip: " Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat ?"

It was out of the question to procure food on the mountain side. Our Lord had arranged the time and the place, "for He Himself knew what He would do." When hunger came upon that crowd, the remembrance of the manna would be forced upon them. Ah! if they could only be fed in the desert!

It is so easy to read of the miracle and pass on; but pause and try to realize the wonder, the excitement, the enthusiasm, when that vast multitude saw and understood what was being done. "Make the men sit down," said our Lord; then He took and blessed the five small loaves, and when He had given thanks, He distributed to them that were set down. Five small loaves for five thousand men! And the loaves multiplied in those divine hands. A harvest takes months to grow and fructify in the earth, but not in the hands of the Creator, God made man. Ten thousand eager eyes were watching and wondering. Each man was eager to receive his share; each one fearful lest the bread should not suffice for all. Ah! the manna their fathers had laboriously gathered before sunrise, and only that which would suffice for the day; here the bread was ready for them, and they did eat and were filled, and twelve baskets of fragments remained over and above to them that had eaten. No wonder their hearts burned within them; no wonder they recognized Him as their Messias. "This is of a truth the prophet that is to come into the world." No wonder that in their excitement they resolved "to take Him by force and make Him King!"

But Jesus "fled again into the mountain Himself alone." Next day they followed Him again, and were rebuked by our Lord: "You seek Me, because you did

eat of the loaves and were filled." They sought to test Him again, whether He were the Messias: "Our fathers did eat manna in the desert," they answered. Alas! when our Blessed Lord would lead them further in their faith in Him, and reveal to them the mystery of the Bread of Life, they murmured at Him because He had said: "I am the living Bread, which came down from heaven." He repeated, "I am the Bread of Life," and to show how this Bread surpassed the manna from heaven, He added, "Your fathers did eat manna in the desert and are dead—if any man shall eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever" (v. 49, 50).

Oh! the sad ending of our Redeemer's loving endeavour to win the hearts of men. "After this many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him." Alas! is not all this repeated in the lives of so many, who should know Him far better than these poor Israelites? Our faith teaches us that this Bread of Life is consecrated at every Mass and has been for wellnigh two thousand years! that it is multiplied far beyond the limits of the desert. In every land where there is a church or altar, He becomes present morning after morning, Who said, "I am the living Bread, who came down from heaven." And how is it effected? By the words of Christ spoken by an ordained priest, "This is My Body." Not one Moses now, but thousands and thousands of priests all over the world bringing down the Bread of Life at the word of their Master—the Messias, Christ the Son of God!

And as of old, so now, many are unwilling and murmur, and, leaving Him, perish of hunger like the poor prodigal sons that they are. And even the good, the frequent, the daily communicants, where is our

enthusiasm? Where the resolve to make Him sole King of our hearts? The good Lord is longing for that. He is drawing us, helping us, winning us to do that. Let nothing henceforth keep our hearts back from entire and zealous surrender of themselves to Him, His service and His love.

Passion Sunday

ETERNITY

" If any man keep My word, he shall not taste death for ever."—JOHN viii. 52.

1. The thought of eternity meant to make us despise this world and strive for heaven.
2. Why so needed ? Because this world contents us.
3. Whereas the remembrance of eternity would make us earnest.
4. Scripture and Holy Church bid us remember eternity.

THE thought of eternity is repeatedly brought before us and thrust upon us as a means to our salvation. How often from our Lord's own lips do we hear such words—" for ever," " eternal life " and " life everlasting." The prayers of the Church continually instil the thought into our souls, concluding " world without end. Amen."

It is not to make life sad and miserable that the thought of eternity is thus obtruded on us, but that it may steady us in our temptations, in our wandering from the path of duty, in our frailties and seeking self-indulgence. The thought of eternity should make us despise this world, " for the world passeth away . . . but he that doth the will of God abideth for ever " (1 John ii. 17). This thought is meant to make us earnest and strenuous, striving our very utmost to gain heaven, the home of our eternity.

And yet, what do we find ? Is the thought wel-

comed as the repeated warning of an anxious Father, lest we should stray and be lost? Alas! no; for the majority of men shun the thought, banish it, dread it. And why? Because instead of being pilgrims in this world, they have settled down in it and have grown fond of it. They know it, it is a pleasant world; it is good enough for them. They have forgotten the words of St. James: "Know you not that the friendship of this world is the enemy of God?" (James iv. 4).

And others fear the thought of eternity, knowing in their hearts that the lives they are leading are not tending to heaven, for tepidity, self-ease, forgetfulness of prayer, neglect of the sacraments, are without doubt proofs that they are being borne along the road that leads to everlasting death. Therefore the thought of "for ever" is a dread to them; and they cowardly try to shirk it and forget it. The voice of conscience may be drowned for a time in the turmoil of life, but the misery and wretchedness of such an existence!—eternal death drawing nearer and nearer. Yea, there are to be found some who, in spite of the lurking fear in their hearts, dare to maintain that there is no eternity, that their souls are not immortal. How few, when they come to die, will dare to brazen this denial out to the end!

Whereas instead of this fear and resentment towards God's warning of eternity, we should learn to love and cherish the thought of "for ever and for ever." Then the light of God's grace would stream down upon our path through life and make us discern the footsteps of the saints—yea, our Lord's own footsteps, Who carried His Cross along that way before us. Each day its memory would strengthen us to attempt, and

give us zeal to persevere. Oh! precious time, short and uncertain indeed, for the past cannot be recalled, and the future cannot be counted on; there is only the present, wherewith to secure an eternity of happiness and glory.

How generously, then, should we undertake to keep the commandments of God, buoyed up with this assurance, that if we do so—and we can with the help of God's grace—we "shall not taste death for ever." The hope of life for ever should enkindle in our souls a noble impulse, loyally to do our utmost to obey, to undertake every duty, to grapple with every difficulty that would bar our path as we follow whither our Lord's words direct us, "labouring for that which endureth to life everlasting" (John vi. 27).

Let us look back to the past, and we shall be forced humbly to acknowledge how little practical influence the thought of eternity has had upon our lives. Please God, like an angel with a flaming sword, it has scared us from grievous sins and daring trespasses against the laws of God. But in our ordinary lives, when the love of Christ has failed to urge us on, when we have loitered and lingered on the way to heaven, unwilling to toil, exaggerating to our souls the difficulties and hardships of the journey, has the thought of eternity roused us to be up and doing, resolute and strong as befits the soldiers of Christ?

It is all our own fault if this thought of eternity has not impressed us and aroused us. The warning heard so often; the thought pondered over so seldom! The word of the Lord has been spoken in mercy: how ungrateful of us to give it so scanty a welcome! Let us pray that we may be mindful of every word that recalls "eternity." The thought is meant to make us

earnest, and raise up our minds to God. We are His children, destined to live with Him for all eternity. Why should we shun the thought? It should give us hope, founded on His promise that we shall not taste death for ever. Surely this should be our comfort, our strength, our happiness.

Palm Sunday

OUR LORD'S LAST DAYS

"Me you have not always."—MATT. xxvi. 11.

1. The memory of these days should be treasured.
2. Christ's entry into Jerusalem.
3. Christ's only destructive miracle: and why?
4. Declarations of His doctrine and refutation of His enemies.
5. The silent preparation for His Passion.

MEMORY loves to dwell on the details surrounding the death of our dear departed friends. Their farewell words and messages are remembered, and repeated, and handed down. They live again in memory. And who deserves such kindly thought, whose words and every action should be treasured up, as devoutly and as gratefully as His, Who for us and our salvation laid down His life? He seems to appeal to us not to forget Him: "Me you have not always with you."

The public entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday was the simple and short-lived triumph of the Saviour. The multitude who had come to Jerusalem for the Paschal festival, hearing of His approach and moved by the crowning miracle of raising Lazarus from the tomb, went forth to meet Him, waving palm branches, the token of victory, and even spreading their garments beneath His feet. As He drew near to the city, with the Temple in view, the disciples burst forth with cries of joy, and the crowds took up the welcome, "Hosanna to the Son of David." The Pharisees feared that their plots against Him would be frustrated, and owned

in the bitterness of their disappointment, "Behold, the whole world has gone after Him." But alas! in the midst of those triumphal cries, an undercurrent of sound swept across the soul of our Lord. In five days hence, instead of "Hosanna" it would be "Crucify Him! away with Him!" The populace was fickle; the priests and Pharisees malicious: and He had come to save His people from their sins. Even as He entered the Temple the royal reception was continued; crowds pressed on Him, with their sick longing to be cured, and the very children taking up the cry of "Hosanna!" St. Luke sums up our Lord's doings thus: "And in the day time, He was teaching in the Temple; but at night, going out, He abode in the mount that is called Olivet" (Luke xxi. 37).

On the following morning, coming early to the Temple, we are told of an occurrence that strikes us with amazement. Passing by Bethphage, which means "the house of figs," our Lord noticed a tree, that gave promise of fruit, although the time for figs was not yet. Luxuriant in leaves, barren of fruit! The very type of the Jewish people: they honour Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. It was natural for our Blessed Lord to seek fruit, for the fruit of the fig-tree is formed before the leaves open, and when they are fully developed ripe fruit should be found beneath them. There was no fruit, and our Lord cursed the tree, and it withered away. This our Saviour's only miracle of destruction signified the judgment destined for the deceitfulness of the Jews, and accords with His prediction of the destruction of the Temple and the calamities that would overtake the nation.

It was the object of His enemies to force Him to such a declaration of His divine power that they might stone

Him to death as a blasphemer. Or again, as when they tempted Him with the coin of the tribute, they hoped to extort from Him a reply that might convict Him of treason to Cæsar, and thus make Him a victim to the Roman power. The parables He spoke—the wicked husbandmen; the man not having on the wedding garment—and His answer, "Render to Cæsar," disconcerted them and put them to silence. "They knew that He spoke of them," says St. Matthew (xxi. 45). His enemies' last attempt to ensnare Him was, "A doctor of the law asked Him, tempting Him: Master, which is the great commandment of the Law?" And our Lord's triumphant reply, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the first and the greatest commandment, and the second is like to this: thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." He had begun his ministry by declaring that He came to fulfil the Law and the Prophets, and He concludes this—the last exposition of His doctrine—with the words, "On these two commandments dependeth the whole Law and the Prophets" (Matt. xxii. 35, 40).

Christ's enemies, foiled in their attempt to stir up the popular fury or the enmity of the Romans, were driven to plot to seize Him by treachery; and the opportunity occurred that very night, by the offer of Judas Iscariot to betray Him. Greed led him to it, and he accepted the miserable price fixed for the compensation for the life of a slave.

From the Tuesday evening until the afternoon of Thursday, our Blessed Lord is shrouded in sacred silence. Long hours indeed in prayer He passed before His sacred Passion. We know not the manner nor the hour of our death. In God's mercy it is veiled

from us. Our loving Saviour knew every detail. Oh! the anguish of that anticipation. He foreknew the cruel work of every mortal sin; and He offered Himself a willing victim to make atonement for each of us. Surely in gratitude we should remember His sufferings and His death, for He, in His loving mercy, remembered each one of us and offered them for us.

And in those hours of silence, the events of which are hidden from us, may we not believe that there was a solemn leave-taking between the Mother and the Son? Our Lady's heart had to be nerved and strengthened for the Sacrifice of Calvary. The work of Redemption had to be realized more poignantly than ever. She had to consent, poor broken-hearted Mother, to the death of her Son. She was obedient to the Will of God even to His Death! Thus Mary Immaculate shared in the Redemption of Calvary.

Good Friday

THE CRUCIFIXION

"The Son of God, Who loved me, and delivered Himself for me."—GAL. ii. 20.

1. Of His own will Christ delivered Himself to the death of the Cross.
2. Why? through love.
3. For love of me! For my sake and instead of me.
4. Prayer for ourselves and for others.

THE Crucifix preaches to us to-day; on this the anniversary of the death of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. The Crucifix preaches to us; for whose figure is that whom we behold dying on the Cross? The Son of God! Human nature draws back astounded. It needs the eye of faith to recognize in that poor, bleeding form other than a wretched malefactor, cruelly done to death. His enemies had, indeed, worked their vengeance on Him. His body was one torn, lacerated wound. Scourges, blows, repeated falls under the Cross, the nails in hands and feet, the crown of thorns, the side opened by the lance—what a picture they present! And yet our faith bids us humbly, sorrowfully, to own—truly this is the Son of God!

But His enemies could not have brought Him to this. It was His own free will, for "He delivered Himself" for the redemption of the world. This enhances it all. He gave Himself, delivered Himself, to the fear and anguish in the garden, as He took upon Himself the sins of mankind. He delivered Himself

to be bound; to be dragged before the judgment seat; to be blasphemed and condemned; to be scourged; to be crowned in derision; to carry His Cross on His bleeding shoulder. He delivered Himself to be nailed to the Cross; to the three hours of weary desolation; and His heart to be pierced by the lance.

And why, O Lord, didst Thou endure all these outrages and sufferings? St. Paul tells us, "The Son of God, Who loved me, and delivered Himself for me." Love is the explanation! In His pity and in His love He redeemed us. In spirit we can catch the sad accents of His love as He hung there dying. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Suffering, dying for us, and yet excusing us to His heavenly Father. Our English version, we are told, does not give us the full pathos of His prayer. In the original it runs, "Jesus was saying"—as if He constantly kept repeating it—"Father, forgive them." Let us picture it to ourselves. As His breast would heave, laboriously, painfully drawing His breath, He would murmur, "Father, forgive them." As in weariness He slowly moved His blessed head, seeking the ease that the crown of thorns denied Him, the selfsame prayer would fall from His lips. And Blessed Mary would catch the tender words, and the sweet Refuge of sinners would repeat them with Him. And John the beloved one and Mary Magdalene would take up the prayer; and thus the first sad litany was repeated, the sorrowing supplication beseeching the heavenly Father to accept the Sacrifice and forgive us poor sinners. Could love go farther?

Thus does the Crucifix preach to us to-day. We can understand how the Cross is the prayer-book of the saints—yea, and how it is the salvation of poor

sinners. If we only gave ourselves to look upon it, listen to it, remember it—could we resist its call to us to repent and give up our sins? Would not despair and doubt of God's mercy be banished? And for the dying what solace, what strength, what peace, leading them to unite their sufferings and death with their Saviour's on the Cross.

And yet there are men, cowardly, selfish, loving the world and their unholy lives so much that they are unwilling to remember the Cross. Ungratefully, cruelly, they try to forget it. But there is another word of the text that surely should change them. That word should touch the heart of every one of us and make us fervent. "For me!" "The Son of God, Who loved me, and delivered Himself for me."

For me! for my sake. Each one of us thought of on the Cross. For each one of us the debt was paid; and the ransom to redeem our soul was the precious Blood of Christ. Heaven was closed against me; the doom of eternal punishment was fixed for me, but Christ died for my sake.

For me! Instead of me! for each one of us should have been the criminal. They were my sufferings that our Blessed Lord endured. Where did He see me that holy Passion-time? Did He recognize me in Judas, the miser, the hypocrite, the betrayer? Or in Peter in his weakness, when he denied his Master? Or amongst the disciples, who abandoned Him, so soon after their first Communion? Did He hear me amongst the rabble jeering at Him and insulting Him? My impurities scourged Him; my pride and uncharitableness pressed the thorns into His brow; my neglect and unwillingness to fulfil my duties laid the heavy cross upon His shoulder; my mortal sins nailed Him to the

Cross and pierced His sacred Heart with the lance. May that precious Blood that we have shed open the eyes of our soul, that like the centurion we may cry, " Indeed this Man was the Son of God " (Mark xv. 30).

On Good Friday we must not be content just to listen: we must pray. Look at the Crucifix, and prayers will rise unbidden from your hearts. First remember all those who are outraging their Saviour and forgetting that He died for them. Pray too for those who have not had our graces and opportunities, that they may turn to Him wholeheartedly this day. And pray for the dying. Their time is short. In memory of His own agonizing Death, our Lord will most mercifully hear one sorrowing word from them, as He did when the good thief prayed to Him. Swift was the merciful reply, and glorious indeed the promise, " This day thou shalt be with Me in paradise " (Luke xxiii. 43).

" The Son of God, Who loved me, and delivered Himself for me." Yea, dear Lord, give me grace to reverse the text, and say, "O Son of God, I love Thee, and deliver myself, offer myself, give myself to Thee."

Easter

THE RESURRECTION

" You seek Jesus of Nazareth, Who was crucified; He is risen."—MARK xvi. 6.

1. Our faith in the risen Saviour.
2. He is risen: the One Who was crucified, dead and buried.
3. Though risen in glory, the same loving Saviour to us.
4. He is risen, and so, by His power, shall we be.

WITH joyful hearts we hail our risen Saviour on this Easter morning. Not like the doubting, disheartened Apostles, wondering whether the glad tidings were true, but with full faith and " lively hope," as St. Peter says, we proclaim the glorious Conqueror of sin and death. Risen, glorious, impassible and immortal, we salute the God made man, our Redeemer, Christ Jesus.

" He is risen," said the angel to the holy women at the sepulchre. He denotes Who it is that has risen, so that there could be no mistake or error of any kind. " You seek Jesus of Nazareth." Yes, the child born of the Virgin Mary, Who was brought up at Nazareth, well known by His kinsmen and acquaintance. The same one Who came forth to preach the way of life, Who went about doing good to all; Whose fame was throughout the land for the cures of the infirm, the cleansing of the lepers, by the raising the very dead to life. That is Jesus of Nazareth! But He was crucified. Yes, so the angel said, " Who was crucified; He is risen!" Ah, His enemies, urged on by the powers

of evil, had vented their full malice upon Him! And He was crucified. He died and He was buried. And they set their guard around His tomb, lest His disciples should steal away His Body and say that He was risen from the dead, as He had prophesied. His enemies had been forewarned and had taken all precautions; but they had plotted against their God in vain. The tomb was empty; the holy women entered into the sepulchre and there was the angel sitting—the glorious messenger of the glad tidings—who declared to them, "You seek Jesus of Nazareth, Who was crucified; He is risen." Christ had raised Himself to life to prove that He was God; that the Redemption that He worked was infinite; that His Victory was for all time, and for all men who sought to share it; and the glory of it in heaven would last for all eternity.

We know the dear, loving Saviour so well from His words and actions in life; we were not afraid of Him as He was then, for He said, "Come to Me, all ye that labour and are burdened"; but will He be the same to us now? The Victor in His glory, will He still be "meek and humble of heart"? Will He still be "the friend of sinners"? How can we expect it, for our sins had crucified Him? Blessed be God! Magdalen tells us a different tale. She was the first recorded to have seen Him! and she had been a sinner, and it was for our sakes that He appeared and spoke so gently to her. Again this very day He walked with two disciples who were doubting Him; and He explained the Scriptures to them and why Christ had to suffer. And they knew Him not. He allowed them to press Him to stay with them, and as they were at table, He blessed the Bread and gave them of it! And their eyes were opened, and they knew the Lord. Oh! the first

blessed Easter Communion! Happy disciples! and it was given to you, for us to learn the lesson that the Sacred Heart in its glory in heaven loves us as tenderly as at the Last Supper or on the Cross of Calvary. Should not our "hearts be burning within us," as these disciples said one to another afterwards, when we find thus proved to us that the risen King of Glory is still the same gentle Jesus Whom we have known and trusted, and Who has forgiven us so often in His mercy?

These remembrances should inflame our hearts and redouble our devotion and our fervour. He died for us to prove His love; He rose again to prove that His love had redeemed us. Gratitude must bind our hearts to His more firmly than ever. Though risen, and immortal and glorious, He is still with us in the Sacrament of His love, and there, united to Him day after day, He wishes to give us that strength and holiness that we may be worthy to be united to Him hereafter. Every Communion is a pledge of future glory. He would have us remember our future destiny, and live so united to Him in will and desire, that we may attain it. What is that destiny?

Easter proclaims it. He is risen, and so "we shall be also in the likeness of His Resurrection" (Rom. vi. 5). After this short life is over, we humbly and trustfully hope, through God's mercy, to be welcomed to the Kingdom of heaven. And, more than that, when this world passes away, and Christ appears at the great judgment day, the bodies of the saved will also rise in glory. His Resurrection is an earnest of ours; "for by a man came death, and by a Man the resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor. xv. 21). "When Christ shall appear, Who is your life, then you also shall appear with Him in glory" (Col. iii. 4).

Thank God for this glorious hope that is enkindled in our hearts by the remembrance of the Resurrection of Christ our Lord. With renewed fervour let us press on faithfully to do His holy Will; seeking in all things to please Him only; using with every care the graces and blessings that He bestows upon us; trying to make sure of our vocation. Hardships and fatigue, sufferings and sorrows must not appal us. If our bodies bear the Cross of Christ now, let us rejoice, for the more we are like Him now, the more we shall be hereafter. Take heart and trust in this belief: "By the Resurrection of Jesus Christ we shall be made heirs of life everlasting" (1 Pet. iii. 22).

Low Sunday

THE VICTORY OF FAITH

"That believing, you may have life in His name."—JOHN xx. 31.

1. What faith holds to.
2. Results of faith: we become the children of God: Christ dwells in our hearts: our salvation.
3. We have to obey, work with, and hold fast to the Faith.
4. The victory of faith.

CHRIST, our Lord, rose from the dead to prove His Divinity, that we might have faith in His name. Faith is a gift from God, and the necessary gift, for without it we cannot please God nor attain to life everlasting. So St. Paul calls it a mystery, which cannot be acquired by learning or reasoning; it is a gift from the Almighty which we must accept and treasure, whereby we believe without doubting whatever God has revealed. Thus it is to know God and Him Whom He sent, Christ Jesus, our Lord.

The first effect, then, of having the Faith is that we become children of God. "For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus," says St. Paul (Gal. iii. 26). Raised up from this world, our souls can truly pray: "Our Father, Who art in heaven." Secondly, by faith, Christ dwells in our hearts. Him, then, we must obey, the God of Truth; to Him we must be loyal as our King; to Him we must be devoted, for He is the God of love. Thus we are "holding the mystery of

faith in a pure conscience" (1 Tim. iii. 10). The third glorious effect will be our salvation! "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls," as St. Peter assures us (1 Pet. i. 9).

But to have been endowed with this great and necessary gift—faith—is not all. We, in the first place, must obey it. We cannot tamper with it, or pick and choose amidst the doctrines revealed; but simply we have to accept whatever it may dictate. And one moment's thought shows us the reason—because faith is of God, all-wise, all-holy, and all-powerful. And calmly to accept obediently is not all. We have to work with it. Nothing availeth but "faith that worketh by charity" (Gal. v. 6). We have to work for heaven; faith shows us the way. Not in the conceits of our own will shall we find the way to heaven, but in following the footsteps, the precepts of Him Who is the author of our Faith. Not only to work, but we must constantly and carefully hold fast to our faith. "Watch ye, stand fast in the Faith, do manfully, be strengthened" (1 Cor. xvi. 13). Be wise and listen to the warning of the great apostle, St. Paul. He had had adversaries of the Faith; he was quick to note their guile and bold in denouncing their insidious attacks. As then, so now, the world battles against the Faith in every way, by open attack, by slander, by ridicule; and cunning and danger are added to these attacks by the wiles and power of the evil one. The ways of the world, the maxims, the life of the world are all against Christ and His Church. We are in the world, but we must not be of the world, but "must hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience" (1 Tim. iii. 10).

If others disbelieve and are unwilling to accept the

Faith in its divine entirety, we, on our part, to make reparation, must believe all the more, work with it in all charity, and hold fast to it in all loyal sincerity. Faith is a great and heavenly gift, but what a weight of responsibility rests on those who have received it! We have to be the champions of the most high God. To give Him glory, to spread His Kingdom is for us our duty and our labour of love. And the remembrance of Him, for Whom we are striving, should make us bold and strenuous and earnest. And with all humility and holy fear, lest we fall away, let us labour. We must always remember that it is God Who gives us both to will and to accomplish. And that should be our prayer; grateful thanks for the Faith, that gives us the good will and the impulse; and humble supplication that we may not be slack in our endeavours, cowardly when difficulties surround us, but fight the good fight to the very end for Christ's dear sake.

What a vile object is a lukewarm Catholic! He is miserable in his own heart, for he knows that he is not living as a child of God, as one in whom Christ dwells, as one to whom the salvation of his soul and the glory of God should be the supreme impulse and work of his life. He feels contemptible himself, and he is the object of contempt even to the worldly-minded. The world despises a coward. And what must he appear like to the angels and saints in heaven, and to his disappointed Master, Who has done so much, Who has done everything a loving God could do for him?

Let us cherish our Faith and be grateful for it. Let us endeavour to be of those " who, by the power of God, are kept by Faith unto salvation. . . . That the trial of your Faith may be found unto praise and glory and

honour at the appearing of Jesus Christ; Whom, having not seen, you love; in Whom also now, though you see Him not, you believe; and believing shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorified, receiving the end of your Faith, even the salvation of your souls" (1 Pet. i. 5–9).

Second Sunday after Easter

THE FOLLOWING OF CHRIST

"Leaving you an example that you should follow His steps."—1 Pet. ii. 21.

1. Example is an encouragement.
2. Example of Christ far more, for His power is with us.
3. Distrust ourselves: look to Him.
4. Seeming failures are not so in the eyes of God.

Often and often through life we find the way to heaven arduous and difficult. To persevere, bravely doing our best, we need constant help and encouragement. The best of encouragements is the example of those who have gone before us, and who have succeeded. Others have attempted, manfully succeeded, and gained the eternal prize—the Kingdom of heaven. This is the reason why devotion to the saints is such a help to us. Their example bids us take courage. They have succeeded; why should not we? But often self, timid and irresolute, draws back, fearing that such and such an example may not suit us; that we may make a mistake; and then we abandon hope and all alone hesitate to do our best.

In following, however, our Blessed Lord's footsteps, we cannot entertain these doubts and fears. For, first, He left us an example on purpose, "that we should follow His steps." His example! "Behold, I come that I should do Thy will, O God" (Heb. x. 7). In trying to follow His footsteps we are not alone. It is not a mere memory of what has been done that is urging

us on. For our Lord is alive, all-powerful, like a fond father watching his children learning and attempting to walk. And if we wish to follow Him we must pray and trust in Him, that He will give us the good will to attempt and the strength to persevere. "Our Lord is a powerful protector and strong stay . . . a preservation from stumbling and a help from falling: He raiseth up the soul and enlighteneth the eyes, and giveth health, and life, and blessing" (Ecclus. xxiv. 19, 20). What an encouragement is this to follow our Lord, for He is faithful to reward us. What is the toil and the labour of patiently following His steps—even laden with the cross that He may send us—compared to the everlasting peace and glory? "For the reward of the Lord continueth for ever."

Our divine Lord has left us His example for the very purpose that we should follow His steps; but not for one moment must we dare to trust to ourselves, and imagine that we have the courage and strength to follow Him. There must be hope and trust in Him in our hearts, that will burst forth into prayer, and in prayer is our preservation and success. Remember St. Peter. He prayed and he walked upon the waters; losing hope and trust, he began to sink. When the Apostles saw our Blessed Lord walking on the sea, St. Peter cried, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come to Thee upon the waters. And He said, Come. And Peter going down out of the boat, walked upon the water to come to Jesus. And seeing the wind strong he was afraid, and when he began to sink, he cried out, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus, stretching forth His hand, took hold of him and said to him, O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?" (Matt. xiv. 28, 31).

Let us lovingly thank our Lord that He has left us

an example to encourage and to strengthen us, "to follow His steps." Let us try to learn how practically we can do this. He was poor and lived a hard life; the reputed son of a carpenter, and He helped St. Joseph at his work. He was obedient and subject to Mary and Joseph. He was charitable and kind to all around Him. And when He entered on His public life to teach the way to heaven, He was often misunderstood and calumniated. His own neighbours and kinsfolk at Nazareth were jealous of Him, and tried to kill Him. When He first spoke of the Bread of Life, His disciples murmured, and many forsook Him and walked no more with Him. The chief priests and Pharisees hated Him, and called Him a devil, and tried to stone Him to death. They plotted against Him, and incited the populace, who five days previously had hailed Him as King and Saviour, to turn against Him: "Away with Him and crucify Him!" And yet dying on the Cross He prayed for them, and offered up His life for their Redemption. It is this Blessed Saviour that we have to imitate in our own little way. We are not called upon to resist unto blood, but we are, day after day, expected to be silent when provoked, and forgiving when injured. We are told to pray for those who hate us and calumniate us. We have to be contented with our poor and hard lot in this life; and we have patiently to accept the Will of God and the sufferings and heart-aches and loneliness and seeming failure of our best endeavours.

Aye, seeming failures! Yes, as the world may judge them and unkind friends around us. But they are not failures in the eyes of our good Father in heaven. If for the love of our Saviour we have thus tried to live, He has blessed every little effort, every kind thought,

word, and deed; every prayer that our heart has offered, longing to be faithful and loyal.

Love transforms our life; love of Him, Whose example we are striving to follow. It is a work of tedious patience and weary perseverance. And each day's endeavour is only a step, a little step, nearer to the end. Pray " that you may walk worthy of God, in all things pleasing . . . strengthened in all patience and long-suffering with joy; giving thanks to God the Father . . . and the Son of His love, in Whom we have Redemption, the remission of sins " (Col. i. 10, 14).

Third Sunday after Easter

OUR GOOD EXAMPLE

"That they may, by the good works which they shall behold in you, glorify God."—1 Pet. ii. 12.

1. Our responsibility to give good example.
2. Avoidance of vainglory in so doing.
3. Examples.
4. Special obligation of parents.

Last Sunday we studied the example that our Blessed Lord left us, and the obligation we are under to follow His steps. To-day St. Peter reminds us that we ourselves are bound to give such good example by our lives that others may, "by the good works which they shall behold in you, glorify God."

To remember that we are obliged to give a good example is first of all a good thing for ourselves. The remembrance steadies us, rebukes our easy-going lives, and nerves us to do our best. We belong to Christ, and we must be loyal subjects of our King. We have received the grace of God in vain, unless our lives show by our uprightness, and by our piety, that we are His. We must be on our guard not to imitate the Pharisee, and make a parade of religion; there must be no ostentation of piety, lest vainglory should spoil our works. A downright earnest life cannot help but influence our neighbours, for they cannot avoid noticing us. Let them see something good in our lives—our regularity in attending Holy Mass, our uprightness, our sociability, our neighbourly kindness.

As St. Paul says to Timothy, "Be thou an example to the faithful, in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in chastity" (1 Tim. iv. 12).

Example is more powerful than words. We may never know the good we have done, but God does. And how that good example is blessed in this world and in the next! England owes its first martyr, St. Alban, to good example. He was a pagan, an honest, kindly man. A fugitive priest, in the days of persecution, sought refuge at his house. Alban received him as a poor stranger. By degrees it dawned on Alban that his unknown guest was of a different stamp from those he had met before, and he found that he spent long hours at night in prayer—and he wondered. Good example was working its blessed effects on that pagan heart. He was attracted to him, and asked the priest to explain his life and religion, and in a short time he was baptized, and joyfully thanked the good God Whom he had now learned to know. The fugitive was at last traced to Alban's house. The new convert, wishing to save the priest's more useful life, effected his escape, and then, robed in the priest's cloak, Alban gave himself up as the one searched for. Angry at thus being cheated, the judge condemned him to be beheaded. And he exulted at his good fortune to be allowed to die for Christ. But good example did not even stop here. On the way to the place of his martyrdom, the executioner was so amazed and touched at Alban's piety and cheerfully forgiving his enemies, that he refused to do his work. He declared he would die with Alban for the same good God; and there, outside the city that bears the martyr's name to this day, they both were beheaded, the executioner being thus baptized in his own blood.

We Catholics, so few amongst so many in this land of ours, are specially watched on that account. No other Church demands such strict adherence to its laws as ours. Our attendance at church, our reverence whilst there, are noted by observant souls, who perhaps are not content with their own place of worship and the laxity of their co-religionists. Years ago a Catholic farmer, who lived opposite a Protestant vicarage, gave good example, unknown to himself, by attending Sunday's Mass. In all weathers he never missed driving his wife and three boys the five miles to their church. Many years after, one of those boys, now himself a priest, called on Cardinal Newman to pay his respects to that venerable and holy man. In conversation he mentioned the home of his boyhood, and humbly said, "Of course, your Eminence does not remember us; we lived opposite your vicarage." "Remember you? I have never forgotten your family. Of a Sunday morning, especially if wild and wet, I used to watch from my study window to see if your good father would venture on his five miles' drive to Mass. But whatever the weather, yes, for certain, your mother would mount, you boys packed at the back, and your father drive you off. What a Catholic he was! That good example knocked at my heart, and I owned to myself that there was something grand in that religion."

May we not, or should we not, be doing good to someone in this way? If we are strict in our religious duties, we are helping on the Kingdom of God. And let us have the good intention, that all we may do may thus do good to others.

But if we all can and are bound to give good example, there is one class more bound than others—one class

that every day, almost every hour, cannot help but give good or bad example. Fathers and mothers! Children learn by imitating: they cannot help it. They may do what they are told just at the time, but their habits will be formed by what they see their fathers and mothers do. What harm a careless parent can cause; what utter ruin a bad one! Whereas, on the other hand, how our holy religion has been handed down through hard days—days of persecution, of bigotry, of ridicule, of poverty, of hardship, with churches few and far apart—and who have been the chief apostles and workers of this? Good fathers and mothers! From the time they taught their little ones at their knees to lisp the holy names "Jesus and Mary," and learn their short and simple prayers—from that time on, through good example, have they kept them faithful and valiant soldiers of the Catholic Church. And thus, from generation to generation, their faith, the sacred inheritance of the family, has been cherished. What a glorious vision from heaven rejoices our forefathers in beholding their children's children following in their footsteps, faithful to their holy religion. They are already enjoying the eternal reward of their good example, and may we, too, persevere in such a life, that others "may, by the good works they shall behold in us, glorify God."

Fourth Sunday after Easter

SINS OF THE TONGUE

" Be slow to speak; and slow to anger."—JAMES i. 19.

1. Universal disregard of this warning.
2. Why? Want of charity towards others.
3. How this evil is spread.
4. How to be on our guard: be slow to speak; unwilling to listen: and if calumniated slow to anger.

THIS warning of St. Paul is utterly neglected, day after day, by a great part of mankind. The sins of the tongue, and the unhappiness and sin caused by them, affect every one of our lives; so that St. James says, " If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man " (Jas. iii. 2): and the wise man bears the same testimony, saying, " For who is there that has not offended with his tongue ?" (Ecclus. xix. 17); and again, " Many have fallen by the edge of the sword, but not so many as have perished by their own tongue " (*ibid.* xxviii. 22).

If, then, these sins are so common and their consequences so direful, is it not well for us to take the warning to heart, and study to bridle our tongue and " be slow to speak "? Uncharitableness is at the root of the evil—lies, backbiting, unkind gossip, detraction, calumny—do not they all spring from this, that we do not love our neighbour as ourselves ? Our neighbour—our brother, indeed, for are we not all children of our heavenly Father ?—has a right to his good name, and to injure that, to rob him of that, is

an insult against our Blessed Lord, Who loves him as much as He loves us. And a sin of the tongue is not a single, isolated sin, as a bad thought or envy or hatred might be—but "may trouble many that were at peace."

There is the friend, or friends, to whom the evil word is spoken. An evil, impure word or suggestion, that may blight and sully an innocent soul; a slanderous word that may teach him to think evil of his neighbour. How often have we given ear to such discourse, afraid through human respect to check it, or perhaps giving a willing ear to it! Thus we become partner in its wickedness, and increase the sin of the speaker, for he will have to answer for the harm he has done our soul. The Scripture calls an evil word a poisoned dart, but it is worse. A dart, however deadly, usually finds but one victim. But an evil word may be as widespread in its havoc as the explosion of an infernal machine! For who can tell how many victims it may find?

One person is guilty of the calumny, for instance. He tells it to one or more. But the person calumniated knows nothing of it; he is at peace as yet! But, alas! for how long? Presently, the false friend, the tale-bearer, the mischief-maker—call him or her what you will—comes and repeats what is said. The Scripture says: "Hast thou heard a word against thy neighbour? let it die within thee" (Ecclus. xix. 10). But instead of that, how many, for gossip's sake, through mischief or perhaps through foolishness, come hot-footed to spread the evil, to destroy one's peace of mind, to enkindle anger and unforgiveness for the injurious words that have been uttered. It has always been the same with poor human nature; and in the Old

Testament we read, " The whisperer and the double-tongued is accursed, for he hath troubled many that were at peace. The tongue of a third person hath disquieted many. The tongue of a third person hath cast out valiant women, and deprived them of their labours. The stroke of a whip maketh a blue mark, but the stroke of the tongue will break the bones " (aye, break hearts) (Ecclus. xxviii. 16, 22).

The third person it is that makes the mischief. There is the backbiter, who utters the lie or the vile aspersion; the victim, the one maligned, as yet at peace in ignorance; but it is the third person, whose " wicked word will change his heart," who, by being a talebearer, wounds his soul, fills it with anger, malice, and hatred. The injustice of it rankles. His peace of mind is gone. What misery, what sins are caused every day by the mischief-maker and the talebearer! If he had only been slow to speak and to repeat, the victim would have been left in peace.

In life we each may be one of these three—the liar or calumniator, or the talebearer, or the one injured and provoked to anger and resentment. To avoid sin we must be on our guard, and careful to be slow to speak. We must respect our neighbour's good name, and neither truly nor falsely speak ill of him. Who are we to pronounce judgment on our brother? Let him that is without sin cast the first stone.

Secondly, we must beware lest we become partner in another's sin by giving ear to malicious talk. If we listen we may repeat. Be brave enough to show that such talk is repugnant to you.

And lastly, if we have been maligned, we must " be slow to anger." If what is said against us is false, " blessed are ye, if you suffer unjustly," says St. Peter.

If we deserve the evil words, let us humble ourselves, and remember, if we forgive, we shall be forgiven! This is hard, and human nature may find it impossible of itself. But though we are hurt and our hearts well-nigh broken, and resentment seething within us, we must be slow to speak and slow to anger, and turn to our Blessed Lord, and pray for patience and a forgiving heart; to do as He bids us, "pray for them that calumniate you; that you may be the children of your Father, Who is in heaven" (Matt. v. 44, 45).

Fifth Sunday after Easter

NEGLECT OF WARNINGS

"Not becoming a forgetful hearer."—JAMES i. 25.

1. All more or less guilty of neglect.
2. We forget warnings of conscience, warnings of grace and of the word of God.
3. Negligent—yes, we own; but only in small matters: but even that dangerous.
4. We become unwilling to remember and to obey. Example of Lot's wife.

THESE words should strike everybody: "Not becoming a forgetful hearer." For let us compare what we have heard, and what we have remembered to do. God's calls and warnings from our earliest years have unceasingly been sounding in our ears. Some have struck us more forcibly, and we have paid attention to them for a time; others, and, alas! so many, have fallen on unheeding ears. For instance, is it not common after listening to a sermon for us to say, "Oh, we know all that!" Yes, but have we carried it out? Nay, rather, have we not become habitually "forgetful hearers"?

It is from conscience that we hear most frequently and most unmistakably. We wince under the lash of a rebuke; we are ashamed at the truth of the complaint of that monitor within us. Ah! yes, at the time it may make us miserable, but only for a time, and very soon, perchance, we become forgetful hearers once again.

Do not suppose that this description applies only to bad and very careless people. They have become so callous, that they refuse to obey. They sneer at the idea of fearing conscience, though in sickness or in danger they do fear it, and for a little while are most cowardly. They seldom hear a sermon or read a good book, and have forgotten the wise and holy lessons of their youthful days. They so seldom hear anything that is good, that they may be said to be past the stage of forgetting.

No, it is our own selves, ordinary good Catholics, who have to take heed of this warning, "Not becoming a forgetful hearer." It is a danger and an evil to forget God's calls and warnings, and why do we so often find ourselves guilty of it? It is, first, because we ourselves are weak and fickle, and prone to evil; that we are too selfish to really try to do our best, and are easily dismayed and lose heart at our failures. It is, again, because we are in the world, surrounded by the world, and filled with the spirit of the world. We have not learned to keep ourselves "unspotted from this world." We grow enamoured of the world, of its ease and comforts. We are so taken up with the pleasant things of life. This is the danger. The world is an enemy of God. And at last we are so enthralled and fascinated by this worldliness, that we have no will-power left, even to remember the warnings of the Almighty, let alone to make a strenuous endeavour to be "a doer of the word."

Many will object: I can well believe and own that it is true that we have been forgetful hearers many and many a time, but it was regarding mere matters of carelessness or negligence. If it had been a question of grave moment, of urgent necessity, of positive

danger, we should have remembered and promptly obeyed. It is just in this kind of excuse that so many make a dreadful mistake. The word of God in the Scriptures and experience itself teach the very opposite.

Yes, self can be so taken up with the pleasures and comfort of life, that there is utter forgetfulness and neglect of endeavouring to save our soul. Conscience is powerless, the grace of God unheeded; yea, if an angel came and took us by the hand to lead us, we should be unwilling to believe his warning, unwilling to obey.

Is that an exaggeration? "Remember Lot's wife," said our Lord, as recorded in St. Luke's gospel (xvii. 32). A brief, emphatic word. Recall the example. Lot, the nephew of the faithful Abraham, "a just man," as St. Peter calls him (2 Pet. ii. 7), chose to live in the country near the Jordan, because the locality was as beautiful "as the paradise of the Lord," says the Scripture (Gen. xiii. 10), though it was near the infamous city of Sodom. He and his wife, however, chose to live there in spite of all. They were "forgetful hearers," for they knew well that they should flee from iniquity and avoid and dread the contamination of the wicked.

And when the Lord decreed to destroy the city of Sodom and the country around, through Abraham's prayers, angels were sent to deliver them. Lot was warned by them and commanded to flee. He knew the anger of the Lord was justified, for his soul had been vexed with the wickedness around him, yet he was loth to go! Life was so pleasant there; the earth so rich and fertile; he had all that man could want. The pleasures of life so enthralled his wife and himself

that the fear of the threatened judgment of the Lord could not move him. The angels had to " press him. And as he lingered, they took his hand and the hand of his wife and two daughters, because the Lord spared him. And they brought him forth and said: 'Save thy life; look not back lest thou also be consumed.' They had to hasten him; he was reluctant and lingered; and much more his wife. She lingers and hesitates; and the angels cry: 'Make haste, and be saved; look not back.'" She could even be deaf to the warning voices of the angels. Love of her home, grief at leaving it, made her " a forgetful hearer "; and, says the Scripture, " His wife, looking behind her, was turned into a statue of salt " (Gen. xix. 19).

Let us not be " forgetful hearers," but be ready and obedient to flee from sin and the evil one, and give ourselves to God. We are all like Lot or Lot's wife! Very nearly lost, but, thank God, not quite; or, alas! very nearly saved, but not quite!

The Ascension

FESTIVAL OF ENCOURAGEMENT

"The Lord Jesus . . . was taken up into heaven."—MARK xvi. 19.

1. Reconstruction of the event.
2. He had been the Way, the Truth, and the Life.
3. He ascended to claim the Kingdom for Himself and all who believe in Him.
4. Remembrance of this day, the hope and strength of His disciples.

THE Ascension is the grand finale of the drama of Christ's life on earth. Short as are the accounts of it in the gospels and Acts of the Apostles, we can reconstruct devoutly the events of this blessed day. St. Luke tells us that "He led them out as far as Bethania." What tender condescension of our Blessed Lord! For the last time He wended His way along the lower slopes of Mount Olivet, accompanied by the disciples and His holy Mother. He loved His friends to the end; and we are told in the gospel that Jesus loved Martha and Mary. So He passed by their home in Bethania with a last, loving look; and at the grave of Lazarus and the house of Simon the leper where He had supped, and mounted the gentle rise to Olivet. There He had spent many a night in prayer; from there He had looked down upon Jerusalem and begun His humble triumph on Palm Sunday, and lower down He had commenced His sacred Passion six weeks before. Now that all things had been accomplished by the

Son of Man, how befitting to rise hence and to enter into His glory. Picture the touching scene of His last farewell. Each of those favoured ones received a look of ineffable love; words of encouragement, to be treasured all life long; they were permitted to kiss His sacred feet, and the hand of blessing was laid upon their heads bowed down in adoration. It is beyond us to realize the farewell of the Mother and the Son! The Mother's heart would yearn never to be parted, but, according to His Will, that Mother gave up her divine Son to become the Mother of the infant Church. Her presence was needed to encourage the Apostles: to be a model to them, and to be a living proof that the Saviour, though departed to enter into His glory, had been a real Man born of the Virgin Mary; Who had lived for us; died for us on the Cross; and had risen again, immortal and glorified, to prove that He was not only Man, but God!

"And the Lord Jesus was taken up to heaven." He had declared Himself thus: "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John xiv. 6). The way of salvation He had shown to men by His obedience to His heavenly Father; by doing good to all; by being meek and humble of heart; by forgiving His enemies; by dying on the Cross for our salvation.

The truth He had taught them. He had renewed the commandments of old and explained and amplified them. He had taught them that the blessedness of life was to be found in poverty, in suffering, in peace, in cleanliness of heart, in suffering persecution for justice' sake.

The life! For from whence could man draw the power to obey the truth, to follow the way, but from that loving God made man, Who made us partakers

of His own strength, endurance, and immortality; Who crowns our endeavours in this short life on earth with a never-ending life of glory ?

And thus, when our Lord ascended into heaven, the Apostles did not lose Him, He only went before them—their Leader, the Victor—to claim that heaven which He had won for us. On ascending, He had lifted up His hands and bestowed such a blessing upon them that their faith rose superior to His departure, and their hearts rejoiced. They had not lost Him ! He had associated them with Himself in His triumph, as the Church sings this day, " Ascendo ad Patrem Meum " (I ascend to My Father and to your Father; to My God and to your God).

What a divine encouragement this vision of their beloved Master ascending to His Kingdom was to the Apostles ! They had now to return, wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit, and then commence their labours. Yes, their labours, their persecutions, their martyrdom before their glory. As their Master, so they themselves. And He had said to them before His departure, " Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead " (Luke xxiv. 46).

How the remembrance of the Ascension has been the source of the heroism of the saints ! Not only to the Apostles, a vivid, lifelong remembrance; but to the martyrs amidst their tortures; to the hermits and fathers of the desert amidst trials and temptations; to the inmates of cloisters, during the slow martyrdom of obedience and unchanging monotony of life. It was heavenly sunshine to them, that lifted up their souls, and made them hopefully and bravely cling to their King and Master, Christ. Aye, and amongst the poor, unknown faithful, amidst their daily trials and

labour and sorrows, the memory that Christ, their Lord, has won the Kingdom for them, has prepared a home for them, is waiting with the welcome on His lips, till they have fought the good fight and been faithful. Oh, how many have persevered through this blessed remembrance!

He was kindness itself to His friends that morning ere He ascended, and He is the same to us—only we have to behold Him in faith. He is here in our churches, on our altars, always in the tabernacle to comfort us day after day. He has not left us orphans, to struggle through life all alone and helpless. We can always come to Him here for solace and for strength. "I have sanctified this house, and put My name there for ever. And My eyes and My heart shall be there always," He says to us; and "If thou wilt walk before Me, in simplicity of heart and uprightness, and wilt do all that I have commanded thee . . . I will establish the throne of thy kingdom for ever" (3 Kings ix. 3, 4). His glorious Ascension, then, is a pledge of ours! "Be thou faithful until death, and I will give thee the crown of life" (Apoc. ii. 10).

Sunday after the Ascension

THE HOLY SPIRIT

"When the Paraclete cometh . . . the Spirit of Truth."—JOHN xv. 2, 6.

1. Our Lord's promise to send the Holy Spirit was not for the Apostles only.
2. But for all His disciples until the end of time.
3. How we need the Holy Spirit.
4. His work within our souls—faith, holy fear, piety, and peace.

OUR Blessed Lord, before He departed and left His disciples, consoled them by telling them of the Paraclete, Whom He would send them. He knew how they would grieve at His departure; how they would miss Him, Who had been to them strength and solace and inspiration. So He tells them that He would send another Paraclete—Comforter. It would be for Him—the Holy Spirit of God, the third Person of the Blessed Trinity—to teach them, to warn them, to defend them from evil. Recall His words: "I will ask the Father and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you for ever" (John xiv. 16). "When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will teach you all truth" (John xvi. 13). "The Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you" (John xiv. 26).

We see that our Lord's promise was not only meant for the disciples there present, but for all His disciples

until the end of time—" that He may abide with you for ever." Yes, for each soul of man has need of the Spirit of Truth, that we may keep His commandments and abide in His love. We need the Holy Spirit because of our own nature we are weak and ignorant and sinful. Self, self-seeking would soon become our guide, our master, and ultimately our ruin, if not checked and made subservient to the Holy Spirit. We need likewise the Holy Spirit to counteract the false standards, the allurements, the seductions of the world. We have to live in the world, yet we have to endeavour to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. We need the Spirit of Truth finally and most emphatically, " that we may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is . . . against the spirits of wickedness. Therefore, take unto you the armour of God that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect . . . with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God " (Eph. vi. 11-17). We are often warned in the Scripture about the evil one, " lest we fall into the snares of the devil," as St. Paul says (1 Tim. iii. 7).

From the dangers from ourselves, the world, the spirit of evil, we see most plainly the absolute necessity of receiving, obeying, and being guided by the Spirit of Truth. With the help of God, let us try to realize what the presence of the Holy Ghost is to our souls—His power, His holy gifts, and the effects of His presence. " Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you," says St. Paul (1 Cor. iii. 16).

The Spirit of God, that other Paraclete, as our Blessed Lord called Him, is given to us in order to inspire our souls with noble aspirations and courage

to endeavour to fulfil them. " To us God hath revealed them by His Holy Spirit . . . that we may know the things that are given to us by God " (1 Cor. ii. 10, 12). It is He Who teaches us to believe, to pray, to endure. The Spirit not only teaches us, but with His divine power enables us to fulfil our duties. " The Spirit also helps our infirmity. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself asketh for us " (Rom. viii. 26).

Thus the Spirit works within our soul, and the first effect is the holy fear of God. That holy fear is " the beginning of the fulness of wisdom." It is not a servile fear, but a fear that makes us feel and appreciate the presence of God, that we are " partakers of the Spirit of God " (Heb. vi. 4). A fear it is that makes us anxious about God, to remember that His all-seeing eye is upon us, to long and try to please Him in all we do.

And the second effect speedily develops from this reverential fear into the love of God, which is called piety. Piety is that disposition of heart that turns to God as our Father; and makes us look upon the Son of God, our blessed Redeemer, as our Friend ! our Brother ! " Because you are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts " (Gal. iv. 6). This piety is the power that makes us adhere to God, and strive to give our whole heart to Him.

Peace is the third effect; that peace which the world cannot give. A peace in spite of our life being a warfare ! A warfare against self, the world, and the evil one. This is the blessed peace of a soul that believes and trusts that it is cared for and loved and protected by its God, and is striving to be faithful to Him.

But we must not be content that the Holy Spirit has taught all this, and that we know it and believe it To know the Truth is not all. To know the blessed effects that the indwelling of the Spirit would work in our hearts is not sufficient. Besides knowing, we must be led by the Spirit, we must walk by the Spirit; and to do this we must day after day most carefully, patiently, lovingly, cherish the Spirit of God within us.

Pentecost

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

"The wonderful works of God."—Acts ii. 11.

1. Pentecost the birthday of the Church.
2. Development of the Church.
3. Its rulers.
4. The children of the universal Church.
5. We, too, are its children; what fidelity and gratitude should be ours!

Wonderful are all the works of the great Creator; but on this day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit in descending on the Apostles commenced a wonderful work that was destined to develop and last even to the consummation of the world. We celebrate to-day the birth of the one, true Church of Jesus Christ. The Apostles were praying and waiting for the fulfilment of the promise of their Divine Master; and on this morning the Paraclete that He had promised descended on them, "and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with divers tongues"; for these were the men commissioned to preach the Gospel to every living creature. We read that the multitude were confounded in mind and amazed, saying, "We have heard them speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."

How much more should we, looking back through the vista of nineteen hundred years, be amazed and proclaim the wonderful works of God. We can behold the growth and development of the Church from its

cradle in the upper chamber in Jerusalem. That which commenced there is the same universal Church, which has existed and spread and taken root in every land, century after century, in spite of the world and the powers of evil. Picture the thousands of cathedrals and churches, from the earliest times to the present day, that have existed and still exist, testifying that they are witnesses of this wonderful work of God.

And the chief figure on that first day of Pentecost, Peter the fisherman, illiterate and unlearned, was one of God's wonderful works. For it was he, filled with the Holy Spirit, who declared there was no other name but that of Jesus Christ whereby we can be saved. And was all his apostolate ruined when he endured the martyr's death? He was the Vicar of Christ, the head of that Church that should never fail, and his power and his prerogatives lived after him. Pope succeeded Pope. For three hundred years each successor of blessed Peter laid down his life under various torments and cruel deaths. Still Sovereign Pontiffs succeeded one another. The days of peace came, the days of expansion. The days of heresy and apostasy followed on, but still the successor of St. Peter sits in Peter's chair, ruling the one, true, and holy Church. Two hundred and fifty-nine Popes have ruled the Church, proving that the Papacy is one of "the wonderful works of God."

And again, beholding in spirit that multitude that gathered round St. Peter that day of Pentecost, we recognize "the wonderful works of God." Gathered from all parts, did it not typify the millions of millions that would through succeeding ages listen to and obey his successors? Lands and continents, even unknown then, and for centuries after, would submit to the yoke

and accept the doctrines of that Church, born of the Holy Spirit this day of Pentecost. Wonder of wonders that the souls of men could be subdued by the Spirit of God speaking through the apostolic missioners of the Church. Empires of old crumbled away, and the Church was found ruling in their place. Barbarians overran Europe, but, their ferocity tamed, their ignorance enlightened, they became docile children of the Church of Christ. Then when the far distant lands of the East and new continents to the West were discovered, the first to enter were those bearing the message of salvation. " Unto the farthest parts of the earth " was verified by the bearers of the Cross and preachers of the Gospel.

This day the Festival of Pentecost is celebrated throughout the whole world. It is the special festival of the Propagation of the Faith, and our hearts overflow with gratitude as we recall how the multitude has spread from Jerusalem to China and Japan, to the southern hemisphere and to the continents across the Atlantic. The same doctrines, the same devotions, the same Sacraments, the same Gospel, the same ruler all over the world ! From pole to pole, hearts are amazed this day at " the wonderful works of God."

Are we simply onlookers this day ? Have we no part, no vital part, in this great Festival ? Yes, indeed, we have. For what is this Church that to-day we are glorifying ? The home of the souls of men ! And the infinite loving work of the Holy Spirit is their sanctification and salvation. And are we not the children of this Church ? The faith that is in us, and the hope of eternal reward, and the love that inflames our hearts are the work of the Holy Spirit. A soul in grace is His divine work—one of " the wonderful

works of God." It is the Holy Spirit that enables us to despise the world and its allurements, and to give ourselves to God. And our yearning to be His—His faithful, obedient servants—brings down our divine Lord into our hearts at Holy Communion. Then filled with His grace and divine Presence, we become temples of God, and may justly claim to be one of "the wonderful works of God." May we always remain children, faithful children, of His divine Church!

Trinity Sunday

THE COMMISSION OF THE CHURCH

"Going, therefore, teach ye all nations."—MATT. xxviii. 19.

1. Christ's final message.
2. The powers given to the Church.
3. Each member's strength is clinging to the Church.
4. Reformers from the first.
5. The Festival bids us renew our allegiance.

THIS gospel is short, but the message is all-important. They are the final words of St. Matthew's gospel. First, our divine Lord claims and asserts His power—"All power is given Me in heaven and in earth." And vested with this power by divine right, as God and Man, the Victim of Calvary, risen triumphantly from the dead, commissions and authorizes His Apostles, and, through them, their successors, to go forth, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

And with the command, He gave them the power, communicating to His Church His own divine power, to preach the truth, to administer the Sacraments, "to observe all things that I have commanded you." All Christians, who have the Bible, and profess to cling to it as the rule of faith, find this commission and these farewell words in their Bible. St. Matthew, who heard these words of Christ spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, wrote them in his gospel, and the Church accepted them as the true words of the Author of its faith. He spoke them, Who knew the hearts

of men, for He had formed them and breathed the spirit of life into them, that they might know, love, and serve Him. He spoke these words, to Whom a thousand years are as one day, to Whom there is no vicissitude or shadow of alteration; He spoke these words, moreover, Who promised, "Behold, I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world."

It is not the individual members of the Church who can pride themselves or boast of their faith or their good works. Their sole chance or hope of salvation is in clinging to the Church, as obedient children, glorying in their inheritance. But it is the Church itself, strong in the power of its divine Founder, trusting fearlessly to His promises that "the gates of hell should not prevail against it," and that "His Spirit would teach it all truths and remain with it for ever," that glories in its existence, its vitality, its unchangeableness.

Believing this, as we do, thank God, are we not amazed to find men—not pagans nor infidels, but men—holding their Bible in their hands, daring to find fault with this Church, the spotless bride of Christ, who brazenly dare to say that it has gone wrong and needs reforming? The Son of God founded the Church; man, ignorant, sinful may be, dares to change and improve, as he thinks, the Holy Church of God. According to them, the Almighty must have promised more than He could perform. He promised to be with His Church all days, but He, the great God, must needs have them to help Him to put things right. They have forgotten that "there is no wisdom, there is no prudence, there is no counsel against the Lord" (Prov. xxi. 30).

Another complaint is that the Church is out of touch

with the times; that it has grown old and decrepit. That is no new cry. There were men, in the days of the Apostles even, who were not content humbly to accept the teaching of the Church, but urged their own innovations and opinions. St. Jude the Apostle writes: "There are certain men . . . denying the only sovereign ruler, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 4). And St. Paul speaks in sorrow, "There are some who trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal. i. 7).

How vain are the innovators of the present day! All they can find to say has been said and preached long ago and come to nothing. "Nothing under the sun is new," says the Bible, "neither is any man able to say: Behold, this is new! for it hath already gone before in the ages before us" (Eccles. i. 10).

This great Festival of the Holy Trinity is a day on which to renew our faith. Baptized as children of the Church in the name of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, we must be loyal, faithful, and glory in our holy religion. Our Blessed Lord, in His power, said, "Teach ye all nations," so we must humbly accept and cling to the teaching of His Church. And not only must we accept the teaching, but we must also obey, because He said, "observing all things that I have commanded." Unlike so many others, we cannot discard the ancient traditions of the Church, and the holy customs that have prevailed from the beginning, for these are apostolic observances. As others discard, so we the more must cling to and reverence these holy practices. And chiefly amongst these divine observances we reverence that word "Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them": and hence we publicly, in word and work, must stand by the salutary practice

of confessing our sins to a priest that he may absolve us from them by the power of God. And again that blessed word we take in all simplicity of faith, "Do this in memory of Me," and that leads us to worship Christ, our Lord, in the Holy Eucharist, and to receive Him in Holy Communion.

By living up to our religion we make our Faith shine before men, by giving testimony to the truth. So many in error; so many utterly careless around us; so many forgetful—yea, even some denying that they have a Father in heaven—all this demands of us more faith, more loyal acceptance of the teaching of the Church.

Sunday after Corpus Christi

THE HOLY MASS

"A certain man made a great supper."—LUKE xiv. 16.

1. The Lord's Supper—the Holy Mass.
2. The holy Sacrifice of the Mass believed in and offered from apostolic times.
3. How devout we should be to the Holy Mass.
4. Mass and Calvary the one Sacrifice.
5. Devotion to the Mass the test of piety.

THE holy Sacrifice of the Mass—the Lord's Supper—is the great, pre-eminent act of our religion. The gospel gives us the very words of our divine Lord: "This is My Body: This is My Blood: do this in memory of Me" (Luke xxii. 19). And St. Paul, to whom the mystery was divinely revealed, proclaims the same great truth: "For I have received of the Lord, that which I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke and said: Take ye and eat, this is My Body, which shall be delivered for you: this do for the commemoration of Me. In like manner, after He had supped, saying, This chalice is the new testament in My Blood" (1 Cor. xi. 23, 25).

And this word was received by the Church and believed in, and the Apostles began the sacred rite—the breaking of Bread; and ever since in the Church of Christ the adorable Sacrifice of the Mass—the Lord's Supper—has been celebrated day after day throughout the long succeeding ages.

Ancient proofs still exist that the Mass was offered in the Catacombs in the days of persecution; and the ruins still existing of ancient and venerable churches tell us of the Holy Mass. The altar was the throne, the church the palace of the King! The art, the skill, the labour of man found their triumph in erecting the noblest buildings for the celebration of the Mass.

Long centuries passed, and there was scarcely an evil whisper breathed against this holy belief, this centre of our worship. Nigh four hundred years ago heretics arose, who denied the divine Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. Their churches, the stolen temples of the ancient Faith, became no longer a home, for He did not dwell there for Whom they had been built. The cold desolation of those empty edifices! The altars no longer needed for sacrifice; the tabernacles destroyed, for the Lord had been driven forth!

Is there not a call, a strong and piercing cry from the Sacred Heart for us Catholics, who believe in the Holy Mass, to be more devout, to be more earnest and loyal towards it? Our forefathers bravely risked fines, imprisonment, and even death for attending Holy Mass. And are we, their children, slack and remiss and coldhearted towards the Sacrifice of the Altar? Even those who never miss a Sunday's Mass, might they not many a time attend a Mass out of devotion on a weekday?

But, alas! we cannot help but know that there are many who disregard and miss the Masses of obligation; through their own neglect and disobedience the Church has been compelled to imitate the Master in the gospel narrative and try to "compel them to come in." Too

often the precept of the Church and the solicitations of the priest are all in vain.

This knowledge should add earnestness to our devotion in attendance at Holy Mass. Devoutly let us renew our faith. The Sacrifice of the Mass is the renewal of Calvary. The same divine Victim becomes present at the consecration; offers Himself for the same intentions—the glory and honour of God; the remission of sins; the salvation of mankind. His love and the efficacy of the offering are the same. It is the want of desire, of love, of willingness to give ourselves to His service and obedience, that limits the power of the blessings of the Holy Sacrifice upon our souls. When we are present let us unite our intentions with those of the Sacred Heart. He died on the Cross, and is offered in the Mass to give His Almighty Father the honour and glory robbed from Him by the sinfulness of mankind. He offers Himself in thanksgiving for the goodness, the unwearied patience in bearing with sinners, and for all the graces and blessings bestowed on us by our heavenly Father. Then He offers Himself, with our souls humbly clinging to Him, as if He were the chief of sinners—for He took all our sins upon Himself—for pardon and for mercy. Did He not say that He would be offered " for the remission of sins "? And that we may persevere wholeheartedly in His loving service He offers Himself pleading for all the favours and blessings and graces that we need and implore for the living and the dead.

If we only gave ourselves a little time, a serious moment, to think, how our hearts would yearn to be present at the holy Sacrifice. It is the test of a true Catholic! Where is our faith if we are not impelled to be present at Mass as often as we can, even at

inconvenience and when an effort is required to enable us to attend? Where is our hope? Do we ever think of and wish for heaven, and yet not use the best means of all to secure it? Where is our love, if we forget or begrudge to spare the time to attend? Love nailed the Victim to the Cross; love brings Him down upon our altars morning after morning to be offered for us. And where is our love unless it brings us here to our knees to praise and thank and bless our Saviour in return? Our Lord longs to be remembered, to be loved, to be thanked: He loves to see us around Him, making humble amends for those who never think of Him; and at each Mass learning ourselves to love Him, trust in Him, and be grateful to Him more and more.

Third Sunday after Pentecost

HOLY COMMUNION

"This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them."—LUKE xv. 2.

1. God's infinite goodness proved by the Holy Eucharist.
2. How to prepare: desire to receive.
3. Trust in our Lord's love.

LAST Sunday the Holy Mass was the subject of our thoughts. To-day let us devote ourselves to study that which is the perfecting and the complement of attending the holy Sacrifice, the receiving Holy Communion. It is a moment that the very angels regard with awe, when we poor, sinful creatures kneel before the altar, and the priest communicates us with the solemn words "May the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve your soul to life everlasting."

Oh! the infinite mercy of God in devising such a means of satisfying the love of His Sacred Heart for each of us. Love yearns for union. The ineffable, loving mercy of the Holy Eucharist itself proves the truth of our belief, that God gives Himself to man for the food and life of his soul. For what intellect of man could have risen to such a height of hope, to have expected such a favour, and have dared to declare such a doctrine? A doctrine that teaches us that the infinitely pure and holy God made Man has given His own sacred Body and Blood in the Holy Eucharist to poor, unworthy, sinful creatures.

And why did God in His love do so? To save

souls! Even the Almighty's love could no farther go in His longing and yearning to save our souls. The Son of God died for them on the Cross. Yes, that was once and long ago; and by that Death He obtained "eternal Redemption." But love could go farther than even to die for us. Our dear Lord wished to bring that Redemption home to the souls of each one of us, time after time, if we sought it and desired it. Daily bread is required for our daily life. And our souls require daily nourishment to strengthen our frailty and weakness, to enable us to toil towards heaven. So the Holy Eucharist is "the food of the wayfarer."

Our souls may regard with envy the saints of God daily receiving, with burning love, the blessed Bread of life. But we who know our negligences and imperfections, and self-love and cowardliness in the service of God, are not worthy of such a favour. We are not worthy, granted; but worthiness is not required. What our good Lord is content with is a desire and a confiding trust.

Frequent—yea, daily—Communion is for those who desire to obey the Will of God; for those who desire to be more closely united to our Blessed Lord; for those who desire to use the divine medicine of the Holy Eucharist as a remedy for passion and frailty. This constitutes the right and proper disposition of soul required by the decree of our Holy Father, Pope Pius X., the apostle of frequent Communion. Custom, or because others go frequently, is not sufficient. We must beware of receiving, as some seem to do, with as little thought, preparation, or reverence as if they were taking holy water. We must learn to desire and long for Holy Communion. This holy desire will grow in our hearts by praying for it and by every devout Com-

munion. It should be our first thought on awakening, Jesus is coming to me! "My soul hath desired Thee in the night, and my spirit within me in the morning, early will I watch to Thee" (Isa. xxvi. 9). And why should we desire Him? To render Him adoration, praise, and glory; to rejoice His Sacred Heart, so lonely in the tabernacle; to grow to love Him, constantly to remember Him; to be brave and generous to do all for His sake.

If we desire, how much more does our Lord desire to give Himself to us! Why did He institute the Holy Eucharist? Why is daily Mass offered? Why is He always in the tabernacle? Because of His desire to be wtih the children of men. Nothing can please, honour, delight the Sacred Heart more than Holy Mass and Holy Communion.

This desire need not be tested just by feeling, it can be proved by fidelity. But because we do not feel the desire, we fall back again on the excuse, we are not worthy, we are full of imperfections and little failures. This excuse again is answered by that second disposition that our Lord loves to find in our hearts. Trust, loving, confiding trust in His goodness. "The greatest pleasure one can give Me," said our Blessed Lord to a devout servant of His, Sister Benigna of Como, "is to believe in My goodness. There should be no limit to this faith in My love. Trust in Me is the key that opens the treasures of mercy. The best preparation for Communion that you can make is to trust in Me."

And why does our Saviour love so to give Himself to us? "He comes," says the same holy virgin, "this God of love comes to seek us in our miseries to do away with them, in our imperfections to correct them, to strengthen our weak wills, to give our good resolves

power to accomplish." Our failings, our weaknesses, are no drawback to our Communions, if we only desire to become better, and trust for that to the power and love of our Lord.

Though we fear our unworthiness, our coldness of desire, our timidity in abandoning ourselves completely to trust and confide in our Lord's goodness, though we fear all this, we can pray, pray day after day, and "He will do the will of them that fear Him, He will hear their prayers and save them" (Ps. cxlv. 19). Each pious reception of Holy Communion will impart to us desire, and fervour, increasing each morning, until our thoughts, our impulses, our will, our activity, through constant union with Christ, our Lord, will be directed by a holy desire, and carried up to God by the strength of our trust and confidence in Him.

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

THE VOICE OF THE TEACHER

"And sitting He taught the multitude out of the ship." LUKE v. 3.

1. As the Master, so the Church is the Teacher.
2. Value of renewing our knowledge of the teaching of the Church.
3. The danger of neglecting it.
4. The reward of obeying the Teacher.

WITH a little thought we can see the wisdom of the Church in choosing the gospel just read for this Sunday. The great festivals are past. Christmas, Lent, Passiontide, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, Corpus Christi—one after another in stately procession have passed. They claimed our attention and veneration, and now begins the long line of the Sundays after Pentecost. We have worshipped the mysteries of our Redemption and the love of Christ, and now each Sunday fresh lessons are given us that we may keep faithful to our religion. Naturally, then, to-day we begin with the episode of our Lord teaching the multitude out of the ship. What the Master did then, the Church continues to do Sunday after Sunday. Some may resent the word "teaching." They may say, We know our religion. Have we to come week after week to be taught like children? Yes, that is the very word—as children of the Church. We may know our religion, and know it well; but the knowledge may lie latent in our souls. And therefore, that we may be able to use our knowledge

as occasion requires, without hesitation or mistake, we have to be constantly reminded of our duties. Does not a business man keep his knowledge bright and keen? his mind alert by constant watching the state of the market, the rise or fall of shares, and the rest? He is not content with what he has already known, but he has to be watchful and keep up to date. We have a more important business to see to than the greatest financier that ever lived. The wealth that he may amass, he has to leave and forsake, when death summons him. Whereas we are laying up treasures in the everlasting Kingdom.

Oh! the value of listening to the teaching of the Church. Any Sunday may recall to mind something that we have overlooked, some duty in which we have grown slack and careless. Any Sunday may give us a warning of failure and disaster, that the enemy of our salvation is plotting to bring about. As soon as we hear the word, we know; yes, but we needed the reminding; we are saved by the warning. Thus we can see the danger of those who neglect hearing the word of God, the teaching of the Church. There are many who despise it; who begrudge the time to listen to it. In their pride they think they need it not; and when it is too late, when they have fallen into some sin, into some bad habit, they have to own in the bitterness of their soul, "Oh! if I had only thought of it in time!" They would not have fallen, disaster would not have overtaken them, if they had only listened to the Church week after week.

That teaching of the Church, which they resent, is the teaching of Christ. The Church has its ministers, and they are only men. You may be more learned than they are, but they are blessed, because they are

doing their duty. They speak what the Church has taught them, and that is the doctrine of Christ. His words are alive and efficacious now as if we heard them from Simon Peter's boat. In that multitude which He addressed, our Blessed Lord saw each of us. He meant His words in the gospels for each of our hearts, and in humble faith we have to receive them from the ministers of His Church.

Take the teaching of the Church each Sunday humbly and your knowledge of the way to heaven will be quickened to make right decisions, to choose the better way. Your way to heaven will be very safe and sure. The great St. Antony, when a youth, heard certain words of the gospel read. He took them as addressed straight to himself, and, forsaking all things, he followed Christ. His great sanctity was the reward of obeying the voice of the Teacher, Christ our Lord. And so with us. We know not the day when the voice will speak direct to our heart. It is not enough to hear it: we must accept it and obey it. St. Peter had listened with wondering attention, drinking in the words of the Master, as He sat in his boat; and then came the command, " Launch out into the deep, and let down your net for a draught." " At Thy word," the word he had listened to, that had given him an insight into the ways of God, that had quickened his faith and given him courage; " at Thy word," despising all worldly prudence; " at Thy word I will let down the net." He had listened, he obeyed, and then the reward ! No wonder he fell at the feet of Jesus, his heart bursting with gratitude, yet humbled at the thought that perhaps for a moment he had been tempted not to obey.

That poor fisherman, who obeyed the voice of the Teacher, became the Prince of the Apostles, the Vicar

of Christ on earth. What an example he gives us! If he had not listened, he would not have had the faith courageously to obey; he would have forfeited the reward that was ready for him. He would have remained Simon the fisherman, instead of becoming St. Peter, the ruler of the Church of Christ.

So with us. Love to hear the words of Christ; the incidents of the gospels; the inspired words of the epistles. Then you will be equipped with the knowledge of the Faith, and alert and ready to obey. " You will be able to resist in the evil day and to stand in all things perfect . . . in all things taking the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God " (Eph. vi. 13, 17).

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

THE WORDS OF CHRIST

"But I say to you."—MATT. v. 22.

1. The words of Christ, the Son of God.
2. What are they? Words that countermand the law of Moses, as regards murder, adultery, swearing, revenge.
3. Finally, His word of love and forgiveness.
4. Even many Catholics careless in respecting these words of Christ.

IN this chapter of St. Matthew these words, "But I say to you," are repeated by our divine Lord six times. They occur in His first sermon on the mount; and were a bold and manifest declaration that Christ our Lord came to change the traditions and customs of the Jews, and to insist on His own doctrine. The multitude that listened must have been amazed. Teachings and practices sanctioned for centuries were ruthlessly condemned and set aside, and a new code of conduct laid down by this new Teacher. "And it came to pass, when Jesus had fully ended these words, the people were in admiration at His doctrine. For He was teaching them as one having power" (Matt. vii. 28, 29).

And if they, who heard Him for the first time, were subdued and awed, how much more reverential and obedient should we be, who know Who this is Who repeated these words so often, "But I say to you." Christ our Lord, the Son of God! Yes, that is what He claimed and proved Himself to be. But that multitude knew it not. To them He was the new Teacher

from Nazareth. It was after this He claimed to be Son of God. You remember how, after He had opened the eyes of the man born blind, and who had been cast out of the synagogue for his adherence to Him, Jesus said to him: "Dost thou believe in the Son of God? He answered and said: Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him? And Jesus said to him: Thou hast both seen Him" (yes, with the eyes He had opened), "and it is He that talketh with thee. And he said: I believe, Lord! and falling down adored Him" (John ix. 35, 38).

Yes, we also adore Him as God, and accept His words as eternal truth, for God can never change and never err. Then let us look into this chapter of St. Matthew, and find what are these words, which being the words of the Son of God must never be disobeyed, omitted, nor altered by man.

First: "You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not kill . . . but I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment . . . be reconciled to thy brother" (Matt. v. 21). Alas! how often is this doctrine disobeyed and disregarded by the world.

Secondly: "Of old it was said: Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say to you, that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart" (*ibid.* 28). Not actions alone, but thoughts and desires denounced as guilty before the eyes of God.

Thirdly: "But I say to you, that whosoever putteth away his wife . . ., and he that shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery" (*ibid.* 32). With these words of the Son of God before them, how dare the iniquitous laws of divorce be passed, to make sin easy and to be thought of no account?

Fourthly: not only perjury forbidden, "But I say to you not to swear at all . . . but let your speech be yea, yea; no, no; and that which is over and above these is evil" (*ibid.* 34, 37).

Fifthly: the law of retaliation is condemned—"an eye for an eye," and instead, this neighbourly spirit insisted on: "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not away" (*ibid.* 42).

And the last word: Instead of "love thy neighbour and hate thy enemy," the Son of God inculcates that doctrine of love and perfection: "But I say to you: love your enemies, do good to them that hate you; pray for them that persecute and calumniate you; that you may be the children of your Father Who is in heaven" (*ibid.* 43–45.)

How sad it is to look around us and behold the world ignoring these emphatic words of Christ; at variance with them; yea, acting in defiance of some of them. Christian states passing laws about divorce, utterly abrogating the law of Christ, as if the divine Lawgiver were a God of yesterday and not of to-day. What answer at the judgment day will be found for having gainsaid the words of Christ? Have they forgotten that He said, "My words shall not pass away" (Luke xxi. 33; Mark xiii. 31)?

And do Catholics, even those who think that they are fairly good Catholics, take all these words to heart and keep them as religiously as they should? Are they as careful about being angry and unforgiving as He commands? Lustful thoughts, swearing—are they avoided with that holy fear that they should be? Have they learned and do they practise, "Give to him that asketh" and "Love your enemies and pray

for them that calumniate you" ? And if not, are they Christ's disciples ? for He says, "If you continue in My word, you shall be My disciples indeed" (John viii. 31). "And if any one love Me, he will keep My word" (John xiv. 23).

We must beware of being led astray by the maxims of the world. We have in very truth and in all exactitude to accept the words of Christ and keep them. It is hard for flesh and blood; it is supernatural work, beyond our powers; but grace and help from God will crown our endeavours to obey, if we ask for His assistance. Be solicitous to remember His words and to keep them, for if we fail and disobey He has said, "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him at the last day" (John xii. 48).

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST

"For some of them came from afar off."—MARK viii. 3.

1. What drew that crowd to follow our Lord?
2. In our days, who are those that are from afar off? Those who know not Christ, and those who have fallen away.
3. The danger of wandering afar off.
4. May the compassion of Christ win us back and keep us near Him.

WE wonder, as we read this gospel, how this multitude had been drawn to our Blessed Lord; how they stayed with Him for three days, and some of them had come from afar off. What a divine attraction it must have been that made these men forget their comfort, their hunger, their weariness, to press round our Blessed Saviour, and listen to the words that fell from His divine lips!

As our Lord drew the crowds to Himself in life, so now He is constantly, by His grace, drawing the hearts of men to His service. And as then, so now, "some come from afar off"; and it is for these that He shows His tenderest compassion, lest they faint on the way to their home—the Kingdom of heaven. Without His help no one can win their way to that blessed home.

Then who are those, in these days of ours, who come from afar off? Those who have not the Faith. Those who have never heard of Him, or been taught the wonders of His mercy. Prayers of others attract them: good example attracts them. The fair fame of holy

Church, with its unity, its progressiveness, with its crowds of faithful worshippers, attracts them. Each of us can help, each of us is bound to help, some soul to follow Christ.

Others, again, from afar off, are children of bad parents, who have not been taught the practice of their religion; who have had no good example at home shown them—the leakage of the Church, who are swept along in the torrent of godlessness, sinfulness, and riotousness of the wicked world.

Others, again, who have fallen away. Once they were innocent children of God, but neglect and carelessness crept in; they wearied of the restriction of a good life; and at last they left their Father's house, and they were seen no more at Mass or the Sacraments. Many, thank God, have not wandered thus far from God; but how few of us have not fallen away to some degree! How few of us can say that we are as good and earnest as once we were—as good as we should be!

The danger of wandering far off, or a little way off, from keeping close to our Lord, and listening to Him, and obeying Him, is this. Whatever the distance may be, it is far enough, and too far, for us to find our way back of ourselves. Many think that they can return to the good life of their early days when they choose, and so put God off. But this is a sad mistake. They cannot of themselves, but only if God in His mercy draws them.

What gratitude should be ours to remember that Christ's mercy and compassion are always seeking to attract us. Patiently and in many most varied ways He is seeking us out and drawing us to Himself. But it is all His merciful doing, and not our own doing. You will say, The prodigal son found his way back

to his father, so why cannot I when I make up my mind?

Yes, the prodigal, happily for himself, did return, and was lovingly received by his father. But what prompted him? What gave him the impulse and the resolution "to arise and go to his father"? What sustained him on the long, hungry journey, and enabled him to face the shame of it, to be "a hired servant" as he expected, where once he was a son? It was the memory, the sweet memory, of his loving, patient father! The poor boy never dreamed that his father, with yearning eyes, was looking for him time after time; he never dreamed of such an affectionate welcome; he only expected to be fed, to be under a roof, to be safe.

When our Blessed Lord was describing that loving father He was portraying Himself. For how many souls from afar off is the Redeemer looking this day! For some He has been waiting for years. The danger is, the longer we are away, the greater chance of forgetting the memory of our Father, of forgetting the compassion of the Sacred Heart of our Lord. If we forget His mercy, where is the power that can draw us back? If we are only beginning to slip away from fervour, let us be afraid; and pray that a loving memory of that compassion may ever live in our hearts.

Realize that kindness of Christ, and we should trust in Him more and more. See what He did, as recorded in the gospel. He worked a miracle for those who had come from afar off, lest they should faint on the way. They had followed and listened to Him, and in return, in compassion, He worked the miracle. And for us as well, if we only come humbly back, He works the miracle of miracles, and nourishes us

with the Bread from heaven, lest we should faint on the journey through life. How sad when our Blessed Lord is thus longing for us, and is prepared to receive us and strengthen us, that so many are kept back from entering again into His holy service, from attendance at Mass, from frequenting Holy Communion, by false shame and through human respect, for fear of what some carping neighbour may say! Oh, may the good God so strengthen us with the memory of His compassion, the confidence in His mercy, that we may arise, determined never to be far from Him again; but rather to cling to Him, cherishing His words, doing His holy Will, faithful to the end!

Saints Peter and Paul

AUTHORITY AND DOCTRINE

"Flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father Who is in heaven."—MATT. xvi. 17.

1. The chosen ones of Christ.
2. St. Peter, the pillar of the Faith.
3. St. Paul, the preacher of the Faith.
4. The same blessed Faith bestowed on us; how we should treasure it.

THE combined festival of Saints Peter and Paul is rightly celebrated as one of the great and important festivals of the year. Rome especially glories in this festival of the Apostles who, by shedding their blood there, consecrated the eternal city to the service of God. But the whole Church, in all lands and in all ages, rejoices on this day of the triumph of the two chief Apostles, who were chosen by God to establish and consolidate His Church on earth. The Church that was destined by God to be universal and imperishable needed divine authority and divine doctrine. And these were given by the Son of God, and entrusted in a special way to the Apostles whose festival we celebrate to-day. The authority of St. Peter was to be handed down in the unbroken line of Sovereign Pontiffs; and the doctrine of St. Paul, divinely revealed to him, was to live for ever in the inspired words of his epistles.

Let us renew our faith by recalling the proofs of this authorization by Christ our Lord, that a poor

illiterate fisherman should rule His Church and hold the Keys of the Kingdom of heaven; and how a Pharisee, a persecutor, should be a vessel of election to teach and preach the doctrines of the God of truth. In the gospel we read on two occasions of the great faith of St. Peter. In St. John (vi. 68), when many disciples left our Lord and walked no more with Him, our Blessed Lord said to the twelve: "Will you also go away? And Peter answered Him: Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have known that Thou art Christ, the Son of God." And in St. Matthew (xvi. 15-19): "Jesus saith to them: But whom do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered and said: Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answering said to him: Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona; because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father Who is in heaven. And I say to thee: Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give thee the Keys of the Kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven." This was the glorious commission bestowed on St. Peter, to whom our Lord also said: "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke xxii. 32). And this authority, given to St. Peter, was destined to be handed down to all his successors, the chief pastors of the Church, the Sovereign Pontiffs, Pope after Pope, in succeeding ages. Invested with this power, their faith should fail not, as the supreme authority in the Church.

"Teach all nations" was the command of Christ,

and therefore His Church was endowed with divinely revealed doctrine. And in this regard St. Paul speaks to us with no uncertain voice. "For I give you to understand, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For neither did I receive it of man, nor did I learn it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. i. 11, 12). Your memory instantly recalls the great truths of religion, with the express testimony of the Apostle regarding them, and how one after the other have been impugned, explained away, or denied, not only by the godless world —the enemy of God—but by those who profess to be Christians, and to believe in the Holy Scriptures.

Take the doctrine of the Resurrection. "For I delivered to you first of all, which I also received, how Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day" (1 Cor. xv. 3, 4). Doubting, denying this is common in these days; and disbelief in it is so condoned that it does not disqualify from the highest positions in the Church in the land! Should not such men remember and fear these words of St. Paul: "If Christ be not risen from the dead, your faith is vain, for you are yet in your sins" (*ibid.* 17)?

And that sweet and blessed doctrine of our Faith—the divine Presence in the Holy Eucharist. Alas, how often denied and blasphemed by various sects in the face of such evidence as this! "I speak as to wise men; judge ye yourselves what I say. The chalice of benediction which we bless, is it not the communion of the Blood of Christ? And the Bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the Body of the Lord?" (1 Cor. x. 15, 16).

These words, which you know so well, let them not

weary you, but glory in them as the great doctrines of our Faith. We hear on all sides that religion is old-fashioned and out of date. Doctrines must be changed, so as to embrace all the variations of modern thought. And do such people think they are something new, something original? "Be not led away with various and strange doctrines," says St. Paul (Heb. xiii. 9). And St. Peter says (2 Peter iii. 3): "In the last days there shall come deceitful scoffers." Can the eternal truth be out of date? "From eternity to eternity Thou art God . . . for a thousand years in Thy sight are as yesterday which is past" (Ps. lxxxix. 2, 4).

For ourselves how grateful we should be to God for the Faith which He has bestowed upon us—its authority and its doctrines. Let us pray to those glorious Apostles—who typify this authority and doctrine—to strengthen our faith, that we may live up to it, peacefully yet manfully, humble yet glorifying God by our obedient and holy lives.

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

THE PROMISE OF SALVATION

"The grace of God, life everlasting."—Rom. vi. 23.

1. The value of a promise.
2. What is this promise?
3. It has been made to us by God.
4. Can we not promise in return to merit its fulfilment?

A PROMISE made to us is an attraction that enkindles hope and leads us to make endeavour. But how often have we been promised and have been disappointed! Or again, promises have been made, but the conditions have not been fulfilled, and there is no result. So a promise on which we can build our hopes, and which may urge us on to do our utmost, must be made by one whom we can trust, by one who has power to fulfil it; and it must be a promise of something well worth gaining. The greater the good that is offered, the more the promise is to be prized. And finally, the condition or the conditions imposed must be within our power of fulfilment.

Then what is the promise that the text alludes to? Life everlasting! We have it plain and unequivocal in Holy Writ: "And this is the promise which God hath promised us—life everlasting" (1 John ii. 25). Test this promise, and see how wholeheartedly we can trust to it. First, it is the promise of one in whom we may confide—the God of Truth. Again, it is the promise of one who has the power to fulfil it—the

Almighty. And it is a promise of infinite value, that will last for all eternity, without fail or change—life everlasting, which is the blessed vision of God and the participation in His glory and beatitude.

And how is this promise to be fulfilled? By our divine Saviour, Jesus Christ. Witness the inspired words of God in the Scriptures: "According to the promise of life, which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. i. 1); and again, "God according to His promise hath raised up to Israel a Saviour, Jesus" (Acts xiii. 23). "For all the promises of God are in Him" (2 Cor. i. 20).

The Son of God, Jesus Christ, became Man and lived amongst us, showed us by example and taught us the way of salvation; He redeemed us by His sacred Passion and Death; He instituted His Church to be our guide and our safeguard, and made it infallible and imperishable by the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. He instituted the Sacraments, and specially the Holy Eucharist, through which we might receive grace and nourishment and strength. All this to prove to us that the promise was efficacious and alive with power. Moreover, that the promise might always be before our minds, illuminating, filling them with hope, inflaming our souls to venture all, to do their utmost, His divine Presence dwells amongst us. In every church He has made His abode to dwell amidst the children of men.

All this is held out to us, and given to us by the promise of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Can it be that this gracious and glorious promise has really been made to us? Look around: does mankind seem to believe it and understand it? That life everlasting is promised, is guaranteed to them? Is it their one thought, engrossing all their attention, inspiring their

actions, their zeal? If life everlasting is promised us, can it be possible that the desire of money, position, comfort, or anything in this fleeting world can occupy our attention, can preoccupy our thoughts so entirely that we utterly disregard and forget this promise of Almighty God?

Perhaps the condition to be fulfilled to gain the reward of the promise is entirely beyond our powers and our hopes. Can we believe for a moment that the just and faithful God would treat us so? No; according to His promise He has raised up a Saviour; so it is through Him, our Saviour Himself, that we can surely fulfil the conditions to make the promise effective. He is ready and longing to give us both the will and the power to do His blessed Will; for that is the condition—we must obey Him and do His holy Will, then there is eternal life for our reward. The Church prays: "O Almighty and eternal God, grant us an increase of faith, hope, and charity, and that we may deserve to obtain what Thou promisest, make us love what Thou commandest." It is because we have not the faith or hope in our hearts to cling to His promise that we have not the love to venture all in striving to gain "life everlasting."

God has promised us so much; cannot we find in our hearts to promise Him in return our obedience, our loyalty, our love? Let us not be smitten by the glamour of the vain promises of the world, so as to give our time, our activity, our souls to seek to gain them. Rather with the faith of St. Peter, let us cry out: "Lord, Thou hast the words of life—to whom shall we go?" Aye, indeed, to whom shall we go, when we feel that this short life is drawing to a close, when death is drawing nigh? What promises will avail us

then, except the one divine promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord?

Everything will slip from our grasp then; we shall have to leave and part from all. What consolation will it then be, that we have trusted in the promise of God —the faithful God—Who will give us life everlasting through His Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ!

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

SONS OF GOD

"Whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."—Rom. viii. 14.

1. This glorious title "sons of God" fails to touch so many hearts.
2. They prefer the world, which is the enemy of God.
3. They object to being "led": fatal mistake.
4. What follows from being sons? Heirs also.

What joy and enthusiasm should be enkindled in our souls by the announcement of this truth, that St. Paul declares to us, that we are destined to be "the sons of God; and if sons, heirs also; co-heirs with Christ." But, alas! this announcement awakens no echo in the souls of so many. They are in this world; they raise their eyes to nothing beyond, but find occupation, pleasure, contentment in the fleeting joys of the present. What a misfortune to disregard the glorious destiny to which they are called, and to content themselves with the world "which passeth away." They give no heed to the warnings of the Scripture: "Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world" (1 John ii. 15); and that other, "The friendship of this world is the enemy of God; whosoever therefore will be a friend of this world becometh an enemy of God" (Jas. ii. 4).

An enemy of God! and they are called to be the sons of God. It is all-important, then, that we watch ourselves, and do not make the fatal mistake of be-

coming an enemy, whereas we are called to be sons. And it is easy and natural to make this mistake, deluded and misguided by self-love and self-sufficiency. Witness those of whom our Blessed Lord speaks, as claiming heaven because they have prayed and done miracles in His name: but they had been ruled by self, and not led by the Spirit of God. Therefore the gospel continues, "And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me, you that work iniquity" (Matt. viii. 23).

How can we explain this? Alas! in all that they had done, it had not been the Will of God they had sought to do, but their own will. They had not been "led by the Spirit of God." This is the test by which we make sure of our calling. "Whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." It is the word "led" that is the stumbling-block! A man has faculties and intelligence: he determines to go by them, imagining that they are all-sufficing. He forgets their limits; of how much he is ignorant; how prone he is to evil; the insidious enemies around him. He chooses his own way.

A fatal mistake, indeed, to imagine we can choose our own way and be independent. Our own way! blind men choosing their own way, and refusing assistance and guidance. Our own way! forgetting that we are prone to evil; that we have deceitful enemies around us, leading us to destruction—enemies, who craftily conceal the dangers and the evils under the guise of pleasure and freedom and independence. Our own way! and yet we cannot shake ourselves free from the thraldom, for we are slaves to our sins. Such a man forfeits the grace and help of the Spirit, and is powerless of himself. For instance, some Sunday he

may hear some word of our Lord in the gospel that is a rebuke to him; he knows that he should change and repent, but no, he clings to his own opinion or to the habit he has formed. He thinks he is free and independent, yet in reality he is a slave, enthralled in his evil ways. Warnings are given; even a bad conscience can be stricken by fear of some evil that seems impending. He is powerless to change, though he dreads the consequences. Aided by the tempter, he stifles the voice of conscience, and remains a miserable slave of sin. Thus, from the practices of a good Christian life, he is led astray and, sooner or later, the tempter leads him from the Faith. Good practices he has abandoned; next some doctrine or precept of the Church annoys him, persistently rebukes him. Will he be humble enough to obey, or rebel and choose his own way and cling to his own will? Alas! he thus falls from the Faith! For what is a heretic, but a chooser, as the meaning of the word implies; and one that clings obstinately to his own opinion in defiance of the Church? He becomes one of those of whom the prophet speaks: "They hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in their own will, and in the perversity of their wicked heart" (Jer. vii. 24).

But how different all is, thank God, for those who lovingly yield themselves to be "led by the Spirit of God." They are "partakers of the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit dwells within them, as St. Paul tells us, and securely in His strength and under His guidance they tread the path of life. Their faith, received at Baptism, strengthened within them at Confirmation, beams down upon their path of life, enlightening them day by day to fulfil their duties to God and man. Walking in the light of this divine Faith, there is no

hesitancy, no doubt, no difficulties in following the road that leads to eternal life. Faith points out the way; hope sustains them in the journey, both the gift of that divine Spirit by Whom they are led. The hope that they are thus the sons of God inspires them with courage to bear their cross, to dare and do whatever the Spirit bids them. This hope bids them also remember that, if they are the sons of God, they are " heirs also, heirs indeed of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Let us pray, then, for the Holy Spirit to endow us with wisdom and understanding to give ourselves to be led by Him, and not by the false maxims of the world, of self, of the evil one. Pray that He may teach us to set a right value on the means to salvation; to relish the things of God; to be ever ready to follow His leading and His guidance, for then we shall be " the sons of God."

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

THE RETRIBUTION OF SIN

"Because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation." —Luke xix. 44.

1. Our Lord's lament over Jerusalem.
2. That city the type of the fate of sinners.
3. The mistake: sinfulness not liberty but slavery.
4. This remembrance helps us to be watchful and to pray.

It was as our Blessed Lord was riding towards Jerusalem, during His brief triumph on Palm Sunday, that He uttered these words. For the last time before His Passion He looked down upon that city which had been blessed in so many ways—the chosen city; the home of the Temple; the city that had heard so many of His divine words and warnings; that had witnessed so many of His miracles. But all to no purpose; for during the next few days that city would resound to the cries, "Away with Him, crucify Him!" Our Lord wept over it as He realized that all His mercies had been of no avail, and foretold the dreadful judgment and punishment that would befall it for its rejection of its Saviour. It was all its own fault, its impenitence and hardness of heart.

Alas! Jerusalem is the type of so many of God's creatures—of ourselves, perchance. God gives a sinner many chances, graces innumerable; visitations of mercy; warnings to urge him to give up his evil ways. But there is an end of God's mercies, for this life is short, and remorseless death is hastening to overtake us.

The last grace offered and disdained, then the all-merciful God has to abandon us, because we "have not known the time of our visitation." Words that verify this flash across our memory. "And Jesus hid Himself" (John vii. 59). "You shall seek Me, and you shall not find Me" (*ibid.* 43). "You shall seek Me, and you shall die in your sin" (*ibid.* 21).

It seems almost impossible that man could prove himself thus obdurate, in spite of all that the loving Saviour has done for him. But always and everywhere there have been men and women, who really and through their own fault have made themselves so guilty and impenitent as to be abandoned by their Saviour and their God. This hard and impenitent heart is the result of the power of the habit of sin, which enslaves them. When a man begins to sin and to turn from God, he thinks he will be his own master and independent. He will not brook the commandments, "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not." His own will is to be master.

There is the fatal mistake! Free, independent, one's own master; yes, such is the lying suggestion of the devil. Whereas the truth, the inspired Word of God, teaches us most emphatically the very opposite, "Amen, amen, I say to you, that whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin" (John viii. 34), are the solemn words of our Blessed Lord Himself. And St. Peter, who, alas! knew what sin was, says, "They themselves are the slaves of corruption, for by whom a man is overcome, of the same he is a slave" (2 Pet. ii. 19). If by sinning we become the servants, the slaves of sin, to what a state of abject slavery, indeed, must a habit of sin enthral us! Of his own power such a man is utterly unable to free himself. He has bound himself beyond release. A bad habit is like a

rope. A child can snap a few slight hempen meshes of which a rope is made. But when countless strains have been twined and formed into a stout rope, the man that is bound with it is powerless. And so with our souls. Habits slight at first, that a good will and a sorrowful heart could break, by degrees form themselves into bonds that defy our efforts, and will become everlasting bonds, unless God's gracious mercy intervenes.

But why all this? We are not as bad as this; no, thank God; but we should be humble and thankful that we are not. For how many graces have the best of us disregarded! How many sins have we not committed! How many habits have begun to twine themselves round our souls, but, by God's mercy, they have been snapped by our repentances and confessions.

A good man, therefore—yea, a very good and devout man—should fear and watch any starting of a careless, sinful habit. He should break it at first, lest it grow too strong and enslave him. This holy fear and watchfulness will make us careful to use God's graces and the means of our salvation, and to obey the admonitions of the Church. And there is one practice that will ensure this carefulness and piety, and it is this: to pray for others. Pray for others, who are in the sad state of habitual sin, and who do not see and understand their peril. It is likely that we know someone who needs prayers. What an act of charity to rescue their soul! Let us give them of our best.

And at this very hour it is certain that there is someone near to death. Remorse, despair, agonizing his soul that he has not known the day of the visitation of God's graces. He may doubt God's goodness and the tender mercy of the Sacred Heart. If our prayers, our

Mass, our Holy Communion could whisper hope to that poor soul, and bring him, writhing in the bondage of his evil habits, humbly to plead for mercy once again, he would find it was not too late! What more precious offering could we make to our heavenly Father than that of a soul redeemed by the precious Blood, snatched from the evil one, even at his last hour? Such prayers will help to save others, and secure for ourselves a holy life now, and a welcome to heaven after a merciful judgment, because we have not stood idly by and let our brethren perish.

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

HOW TO PRAY

"O God, be merciful to me a sinner."—LUKE xviii. 13.

1. One prayed and offended God; the other prayed and was justified. Why?
2. Not that we are as bad as the Pharisee; but it would be better for us to be more like the Publican.
3. Perhaps we resent being classed with him, a sinner.
4. How did the saints pray?

How many of us at times have wondered why our Blessed Lord spoke only of two kinds of prayer, the Pharisee's and the Publican's. Where do we come in —we ordinary, everyday kind of Catholics? Surely we are scarcely as proud and presumptuous as the Pharisee, whose very prayer was turned into sin and offended God; and, on the other hand, perhaps in our own hearts, we almost resent being classed with the Publican. And yet our Lord, divine truth and wisdom, made no reference to such as we think we are —not so bad as either.

Let us not be too complacent. Our Lord describes a man who was well instructed, outwardly irreproachable, a model man as he thought himself, and yet he knew not how to pray. He mistook vainglory, boastfulness, attitudinizing, as prayer; he disdains his neighbour, he praised himself instead of the Almighty! Whereas the other, humble in the consciousness of his sinfulness and frailty, besought the mercy of God. Short was his prayer, but it was from the heart. He

found mercy and was justified. It was mercy that he needed; mercy that he longed for and prayed for; and mercy that was granted him.

The Pharisee knew not how to pray, because he did not realize his need of God's mercy, but trusted in his own self-righteousness. The Publican knew his need of God's mercy, prayed for it and obtained it. According, then, to our realizing our need of mercy, our prayer will be acceptable and blessed. If we resent in our hearts being classed with sinners, needy and weak and prone to evil, we are not in the state of humility, which longs for and receives the mercy of our Father from heaven. Without prayer we cannot be saved, and there can be no genuine prayer unless we realize our need of grace and mercy. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity" (1 John i. 8, 9). They need not be glaring sins, that the world looks askance at; but whose heart has not been defiled in thought, word, or deed? Have we never disobeyed a commandment through self-seeking, self-indulgence, or wilful negligence? Then do we not need to pray that such sins should be forgiven, and for grace lest again we relapse and forfeit God's friendship?

Our need of grace and mercy is evident, and the means to obtain every blessing is humble prayer. "By all prayer and supplication, praying at all times," says St. Paul (Eph. vi. 18). And David teaches us to pray: "Help me, O Lord my God, save me according to Thy mercy" (Ps. cix. 26). "Thou art plenteous in mercy to all that call upon Thee" (Ps. xxxv. 5). And God's mercy is not only to forgive, but

to keep us safe and strengthen us to be faithful. In answer to prayer there is God's constant watchfulness and the care of a loving Father. Prayer makes us mindful of God's mercy and anxious to correspond to His graces, and be faithful in observance. It makes us grateful for our Father's care and solicitude. And gratitude merits a continuation of God's favours. The kindness of God is revealed to us in prayer. How does the Scripture describe the goodness of God? "Thou, O Lord, art a God of compassion, and merciful: patient, and of much mercy" (Ps. lxxxv. 15). "The Lord is gracious, merciful, patient, and plenteous in mercy. The Lord is sweet to all; and His tender mercies are above all His works" (Ps. cxliv. 9).

It is prayer that creates this peace and trustfulness in God; that made the austerities of the saints a foretaste of the joys of heaven. They were wisely humble enough to know that they could not do without the mercy of God, and yet trustful that they could obtain it and every grace if they prayed for it. How different our prayers would be if we realized our need of the mercy of God, and how prayer would always obtain it for us, if we humbly sought it. The saints did, and constant was their earnest, humble prayer. Who are we to dare to be self-sufficient, and imagine we need not pray for forgiveness of the past? Pray to make a good beginning once again; pray to persevere, for without it we cannot hope to persevere, a day or an hour, in doing good.

Let us recall a prayer of St. Gertrude. It reads as if a poor sinner, like the Publican, had composed it; and not a great saint, who was favoured with the gift of miracles, had frequent visions of our Blessed Lord, and who was the first to introduce devotion to

the Sacred Heart. This is the prayer: "O sweet mercy of God, full of tenderness and clemency, behold, in the sorrow and pressing need of my heart, I seek safety in Thy loving Will, for Thou art my whole hope and trust. Thou hast never despised one sad and sorrowful. Thou hast never rejected the vilest sinner. Thou hast never abandoned one seeking help. Thou hast never passed by one in grievous trouble without a look of mercy. The needy and poor Thou dost always assist, as a mother her child. To all invoking Thy most holy name Thy loving assistance is given. And even unworthy me, Thou wilt not cast from Thee on account of my sins and my unworthy life" (Exer. c. vii.). Let us implore our Lord to grant us the spirit of such prayer as this. We shall not then be ashamed to use the prayer of the Gospel, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." Frequently and from our heart let us say it, and we shall be justified in the sight of God.

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

OUR FAITH

"By which also you are saved."—1 Cor. xv. 2.

1. Faith the gift of God.
2. The objects of our faith in the gospels—viz., Redemption, Church, Sacraments, Prayer, Reward in heaven.
3. Some fall away from faith, some think little of it; few treasure it.

Faith, without which we cannot be saved, is the gift of God. And faith is the most necessary gift for us to possess, and the noblest gift that the Almighty can bestow upon us, for faith can lead us to life eternal. For faith to do this, we must have a knowledge of its doctrines, and we must strenuously live up to it.

Faith teaches us through the gospels. In the Gospel we can find all that it is necessary for us to know. And this knowledge is imparted to us in such a way that to know leads us to love and serve our good and merciful God. We adore one God in Three Persons. —Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost. We are taught that God the Son became Man, born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Ghost. And His object in this—His Incarnation—was the Redemption of fallen man. The consummation of our Redemption was the Death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, on Calvary.

But the gospels teach us, moreover, that during His life on earth our Blessed Lord and Saviour established His Church, which was commissioned to preach the Gospel to every living creature. This Church was

fortified with the promise of Christ, that it should be imperishable; that the Holy Spirit should teach it all truth, and that He Himself would remain with it until the end of time. That this Church should continue in its blessed work of guarding the truth and saving souls, Christ appointed a Vicar, the head of the Church, Peter the rock, to whom His powers were delegated, for to him He gave the Keys of the Kingdom of heaven.

Moreover, to seal us unto the Faith, and to strengthen us to act up to it, we are taught in the holy Gospel that Christ instituted the Seven Sacraments, by which grace is given to our souls. This power they have from their divine institution by Christ, the merits of Whose precious Blood is applied by them to the souls of men. The first is Baptism, which cleanses us from original sin, makes us Christians, children of God, and members of His Church. We receive the Holy Ghost in Confirmation to make us strong and perfect Christians. In the Holy Eucharist, which is not only a Sacrament in which we receive the true Body and Blood of Christ, but a Sacrifice also, the Holy Mass, which is one and the same Sacrifice with that of the Cross.

The holy Gospel also hands down those blessed words of the Saviour: " Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them " (John xx. 22). How faith makes poor sinners cling in hope to this Sacrament of Penance. The sick and the dying are not forgotten in the list of Sacraments. The continuation of priests and bishops for the ministry is safeguarded by the Sacrament of Holy Orders; and family life is blessed and ennobled by the Sacrament of Matrimony.

Faith does not leave us lonely and unprotected in our

daily life. How we should wander and lose our way, and be seduced by vain pleasures and pursuits on all sides, if our Faith let us forget God! But in the Gospel we are taught the duty of prayer—to raise up our minds and hearts to God. Our Blessed Lord Himself taught us how to pray! To lift up our souls to our Father in heaven; to do Him honour by our good lives; to long for His Kingdom to come; to know that perfection is in doing His holy Will; to turn to Him for strength for soul and body; to be forgiving to others, as we pray Him to be forgiving to us. Oh! blessed prayer that thus directs our hearts and souls to God each day of life. "Pray always," says the Gospel; and our Blessed Lord gave us the example, praying for us on the mountain side the long night through. And we need not fear that our poor prayers will be of no avail, for we pray "through Jesus Christ our Lord." Remember His promises, "If you shall ask Me anything in My name, that I will do" (John xiv. 14). "If you then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children: how much more will your Father, who is in heaven, give good things to them that ask Him" (Matt. vii. 11). "Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you" (*ibid.* 7). The Gospel repeatedly assures us of blessed answers to our prayers.

And most glorious too in the Gospel is that blessed assurance of eternal reward, if we keep steadfast to the Church, led on by our holy Faith. After the Last Supper, our Lord prayed thus: "Father, I will that where I am, they also, whom Thou hast given Me, may be with Me: that they may see My glory which Thou hast given Me" (John xvii. 24). But speaking as the Judge our divine Lord and King speaks thus:

"Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the Kingdom prepared for you" (Matt. xxv. 34). Oh! how often have we prayed "Thy Kingdom come!" And thus our faith will be crowned in that eternal Kingdom of God.

Thus is our faith taught by the holy Gospel. Can it be that men, who once have been thus blessed with the sacred gift of faith, should fall away? It is, alas! too true. And for what have they abandoned their faith? That will be the remorse of it all throughout eternity. For what have they bartered their soul, their immortal soul, the soul that by faith was the child of God—the soul that had been redeemed by the precious Blood of Christ?

But many amongst us think but far too little of this gift of faith. There is something else that they prize still more. What can it be but something perishable, for this world passeth away, but faith leads to immortal glory. We then must treasure our faith, the blessed gift of God. We must know it thoroughly, follow its guidance, be loyal to it, and profess it openly. The Gospel and the Faith "you have received, wherein you stand; by which also you are saved, if you hold fast." Remember, eternal life depends on that "if you hold fast."

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

KINDLINESS ONE TO ANOTHER

"He that showed mercy to him . . . and Jesus said to him: Go and do thou in like manner."—LUKE x. 37.

1. How many neglect to do "in like manner."
2. Love one another in thought, word, and deed.
3. Even in small things, how blessed by peace of conscience and piety.
4. But the greatest blessing is, by practising kindliness, we grow like our Lord.

THE touching parable of this day's gospel contains many lessons, and amongst others, it is an instruction how we should fulfil that command of our Blessed Saviour, "Love one another as I have loved you" (John xiii. 34). And the necessity for us to study this lesson is impressed on us by the fact that so many neglect this duty. This we see from the parable, for our Lord tells us how the priest and the Levite, representing good people and those who should have known their duty, passed by the wounded man; and it was left to a poor Samaritan—an outcast, as the Jews considered him—to give us an example of brotherly love. The very lawyer who had cross-questioned our Blessed Lord sought to evade the command by asking, "Who is my neighbour?" But he brought on himself the rebuke which forced from him the answer that will teach mankind until the end of time. Jesus said to him, "Which of these three, in thy opinion, was neighbour to him that fell amongst robbers?" He was compelled to answer, "He that showed mercy to him."

Love for our neighbour is a duty by the command of God. To love God is the first and great commandment. "And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. xxii. 39). And the practice of this duty is inculcated and explained in this parable. Anyone needing kindly assistance is our neighbour, and we are bound, according to our ability, to help him. Even by thought we can be charitable, and study how to comfort the afflicted and the dying. A pitying thought would lead us to pray, and with prayers we can follow even the dying, and rescue them from purgatory. By word, by comforting, consoling, advising those in trouble. By deed, by bestowing alms, taking trouble to assist them, by visiting the sick and the dying.

Alas! our neighbourly love is often weak and attenuated for want of practice. We are so engrossed with ourselves, with our own comforts and well-being, that we forget others, and begrudge a little sacrifice for them. To some, perhaps, we are a little charitable: their misery appeals to us. Others we pass by: their poverty, disease, surroundings are repulsive to us. We cannot bring ourselves to the practice of kindly charity to them. We shudder at the remembrance of what so many saints and pious people have done—visiting the hospitals, seeking out the afflicted in their homes, and attending to them in their wretchedness.

But how many other ways are there of being charitable, that do not call for such heroism! Begin with humble little practices, but let them be daily ones. A daily practice soon becomes a habit, and little kindnesses will nourish our thoughtfulness, our generosity, and presently we shall find ourselves showing mercy and being blessed by it. The least thing done for

Christ's sake is worthy of reward—even "a cup of cold water" given in His name. The rich man, who was buried in hell, cried out to Abraham for a drop of cold water to cool his tongue. He was past all mercy. But the souls in purgatory are longing for a little alleviation; and how many are totally forgotten by their friends, perhaps even by those to whom they had been so kind in life! Perhaps some fond mother suffering now for being too indulgent to us, and we heartlessly forget her. "Show mercy," by prayers, masses, and do not begrudge a Holy Communion offered for them. How blessed will be the reward of our charity, and how grateful we shall be for having practised it, when our time comes to be judged and punished!

Amongst the rewards for kindliness to others, who can tell the peace of conscience and happiness that result from works of mercy, or even from words of consolation, with which we have comforted others? The hard-hearted, the selfish, the haughty cannot picture to themselves what they miss, and the comforting, holy joy of which they deprive their souls.

But the greatest blessing for being kindly one to another is this, that day by day we are growing more like our Blessed Lord, Who went about doing good to all. His spirit is filling our souls, and our hard and selfish hearts are being subdued and taking up the yoke of Christ. "Love one another as I have loved you." This is the motive that urges us to be kind and charitable; to grow like to Him should be our daily endeavour. Therefore a peace, that the world cannot understand, envelops our daily life, and by degrees this world and its love and its pleasures lose their fascination for us; and with joy we feel that it is heaven and the Lord of heaven to Whom we are seeking to attain.

Practising kindliness, in little ways day after day, transforms our lives, and from being selfish and hard we grow prompt and generous, ready for some great occasion, which may arise, when we can prove ourselves imitators of our divine Master, and ready for His sake to sacrifice ourselves for the good of others.

"Go and do thou in like manner." This He bids us do. Unless we attempt it, force ourselves to do it, we are disobeying; we are cowards. Self is our master; our Blessed Lord is ignored. No wonder our prayers are unheard; our passions unsubdued; the practice of piety repugnant. Our religion is merely an outward show; the spirit of Christ is not in our hearts; we hear, but heed not, His words, "Love one another as I have loved you."

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

SELFISHNESS

"Where are the nine?"—LUKE xvii. 17.

1. Our petitions very different from our thanks: selfishness the cause.
2. The miracle proves that nine out of ten were selfish and ungrateful.
3. How our Blessed Lord suffered from ingratitude.
4. Let us learn unselfishness from our Saviour, and unite our thanks with His in the Holy Eucharist.

ALL prayer is not simply a prayer of petition, of asking, however much we may need mercy and grace and forgiveness. Praise and thanksgiving are due to the almighty and loving God. The angels and blessed in heaven sing without ceasing the glory and praise of God, and their grateful thanks will last throughout eternity. But on earth how different are nine out of every ten of mankind! We are earnest when we want anything; in fear and misery and pain we make our petitions to God repeatedly and earnestly. The favour granted; the fear removed; the pain alleviated; oh, how poor our gratitude! The old saying is true, "Eaten bread is soon forgotten."

We cannot help but think thus with the example of the lepers fresh in our minds to-day. Anxious, earnest, imploring were those lepers in their misery. The voice of the Saviour filled them with hope, they obeyed; they were cleansed, to their utter joy and amazement; but only one returned, giving thanks to his divine benefactor. Selfish in their prayer, to get rid of

their loathsome disease; selfish even when miraculously cured, they went on their way selfishly rejoicing!

"Where are the nine?" It is a humiliating avowal to own that we too have been selfish; that we find ourselves amongst the nine. Our conscience can recall anxiety, fear, tears in the past, when we humbly begged of God for forgiveness of some grave sin; in dread of a calamity or the expectation of death. Yes, and conscience is ashamed to own the brief, half-hearted, or perhaps forgotten gratitude with which we repaid our loving Lord. Selfishness led us to beseech and pray; selfishness led us to forget the grateful thanks that were due.

How, then, can we overcome this love of self, which is the cause of our want of thankfulness? Gratitude is due to God, and He loves us to be grateful. Ingratitude hurt the Sacred Heart of our divine Lord, not now indeed, but in His lifetime. Continually, all through those thirty-three years of His days on earth, our Lord had present in His mind the ingratitude of men, and it grieved Him. He knew all that He would do and suffer for sinners, and infinite love could do no more—and He knew all the neglect, the forgetfulness, the ingratitude of those whom He had loved so much. We are told that the sufferings of His soul were greater far than the sufferings of His sacred Body in His Passion. The scourging, the crown of thorns, the nails through His hands and feet were less agonizing than the stabs of ingratitude through His tender, loving Heart. The bodily sufferings of the Passion, from His Betrayal to His Death, were over on Good Friday, but in His Heart He had suffered all His life. It was not merely the ingratitude with which He was treated whilst on earth, but all the ingratitude that would be shown Him, the

Prisoner of love in the Holy Eucharist. He foreknew how He would be treated, even by those who believe in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar—all their neglect, forgetfulness, disdaining to visit Him, to receive Him. They know that Mass and Holy Communion are the supreme acts of love and thanksgiving to Almighty God. Alas! "where are the nine?" Some few are faithful and loving, but where are the nine? By most men, He is often and carelessly forgotten.

What a model of unselfishness is our dear Lord! Though He knew all this and suffered it, yet did He give Himself not only to the Cross; but to continue His Redemption, He renews it in each Holy Mass, and dwells continually with us in the tabernacle: "I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20). If we would only study His unselfishness and make the memory of it live within our hearts, it would shame us; it would make us annihilate the self-love within us. Let us, then, learn unselfishness from our Lord in the tabernacle. He is there longing for us to visit Him, to pray to Him, to love Him and receive Him. Look back at our own lives. For days, weeks, months perhaps, we have forgotten Him. How cold and distracted we are even in His sacred Presence! During how many a Mass of obligation it has been merely by our bodily presence that we have been before Him, and our hearts far from Him. Selfishness again! Distractions born of worldly desires, of uncharitableness, because self had been slighted or hurt, of memories of self-gratification, of memories of our sinful past perhaps, have occupied our minds. And all the time, He, our Divine Benefactor, Whom we were pretending to worship, was waiting for a loving word of thanks.

Our poor thanks—are they worth offering? Are they worthy of His acceptance? Yes, indeed; for in His mercy He has made Himself our own thank-offering! Jesus, in the Holy Eucharist, is the thank-offering. At Holy Mass, at Holy Communion, we are united to Him; and our poor thanks are borne up to heaven with His, and accepted before the throne of God.

The Assumption

OUR LADY'S JUST REWARD

"Justice hath looked down from heaven."—Ps. lxxxiv. 12.

1. We look for mercy, but Mary Immaculate could look and hope for justice.
2. Review of her life.
3. The justice—a glorious reward.
4. Because we are hers, our Lady claims our salvation in justice too.

It is only natural that we poor sinful creatures should look for the mercy of God; that we should hope for His mercy; and trust for our salvation to that blessed and infinite mercy of our heavenly Father. It strikes us with wonder even at a holy person—Blessed Sister Teresa of Lisieux—saying, "I trust as much to the justice of God, as to His mercy." His justice! we are filled with a holy fear at the mention of it.

But to-day, the Festival of the Assumption of the Blessed Mother of God, we have to acclaim His justice, and exult in its blessed work. "Justice hath looked down from heaven." Had not our Blessed Lady earned her reward? Was it not time that heaven should claim her, and Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, welcome her into everlasting glory?

Review the life of the poor, humble virgin of Nazareth. At the greeting of the angel, obediently had she accepted the holy Will of God: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." She offered, as a holocaust, her own free will, and chose and unfalteringly fulfilled the blessed

Will of God. Bethlehem, and Nazareth, and Calvary, and the lonesome years after the Ascension of our Lord were accepted lovingly. To be the Mother of Sorrows —yes, for her Son's sake and for us sinners—was not refused. On the contrary she offered to co-operate with her divine Son in the Redemption of the world. She would be a Mother to poor sinners, and pray for those who persecuted Him and forgive those who crucified Him. She became a consoler, a refuge, an advocate for all who repented and cried for pardon. The Immaculate one did not disdain or reject the fallen and the outcast.

This was her life on earth. She had never sinned, yet the sword of sorrow, as Simeon prophesied, pierced her soul. She had never sinned, yet she stood by the Cross, and saw Him die for sin. She shared His anguish, and in her broken-hearted grief unselfishly accepted us as her children and forgave us and took us to her heart.

Let us pass from these thoughts on this great day, and remember "the beauty of justice" (Jer. xxxi. 23), and glorify the Almighty "a just God and a Saviour" (Isa xiv. 21). This is the day that "justice hath looked down from heaven." It was time for the Mother to be united to her Son in His glory. He Himself had risen from the dead, triumphant over sin and death; He had ascended to His eternal Kingdom. In His glory He was still the Jesus born of the Virgin Mary; and justice claimed that the Immaculate Mother—both body and soul—should reign in that heaven, which was the Kingdom of her Son! The prophets who had foretold of the Virgin Mother were longing to acclaim her. The angels, who had sung "Gloria in excelsis" over Bethlehem, were longing to do honour to her as their Queen. Her work on earth

was done. For twelve years she had been left to be a Mother to comfort and instruct the Apostles and the infant Church; and now her heavenly career of intercession, of befriending and pleading for all of us poor sinners, was to commence. She was to be "the life and sweetness and the hope" of all in this vale of tears through the long centuries that had to come. She was to welcome each faithful soul, when their exile was ended, and to show them the blessed fruit of her womb, Jesus, our Lord and God. Oh! truly a Mother's gracious work to unite each member of our heavenly Father's family in their blessed and eternal home. What reunions have taken place since this day of her glorious Assumption! The apostles, after they had laboured and fought the good fight, and blessed John the last of all, were welcomed by her. The martyrs, their cruel conflict over, surrounded their Queen in heaven. The holy confessors and doctors, who had preached and taught of her—Mary the Virgin Mother, the Mother of God, the Immaculate one—they too were welcomed by their Queen. The Virgins who, encoucouraged by her glorious example, had humbly tried to imitate her, longed to sing her praises and behold her in her glory. And all who have been saved have been repaid for praying to her, and trusting in her solicitude and protection. The prayer at Mass on this her festival day says, "Pardon, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the sins of thy servants, that we, who of our own actions are unable to please Thee, may be saved by the intercession of the Mother of Thy Son, our Lord." Who shall imagine or count the number of those, now amongst the blessed ones in heaven, who have been saved by Mary's prayers?

Yes, divine justice raised her to be Queen of heaven;

and on justice, too, our Blessed Lady founds her claim for our salvation likewise. How can that be? In mercy we may hope; but in justice? Can we poor, frail sinners dare to hope for it? Yes, because we are hers, and God cannot take the children from their Mother! Those that are lost renounced their Mother, and have perished. But we claim her as Mother; pray to her; trust in her. The dying Saviour gave us to her as her children; and gave us, for whom He was dying, Mary to be our Mother. At Naim, when Christ raised the young man to life, He gave him to his mother. And the same blessed Lord has raised our souls to life by His Passion and Death, and He gave us to our Mother. So we, not daring to hope of ourselves, are filled with hope that Mary Mother will claim us as her children, and in justice, that where the Mother is, the children too should be, or would it be a home? Pray to her, claim her, call upon her day after day as Mother; and our Mother will keep in her heart every prayer that we have uttered. And the justice of God, that has raised up our Mother to be Queen of heaven, will for her sake, and through her intercession, welcome us to our eternal home.

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

OUR AIM IN LIFE

"Seek ye therefore first the Kingdom of God."—MATT. vi. 33.

1. It is natural to seek and desire.
2. But how few, the Kingdom of God!
3. What is meant by "the Kingdom of God"?—Christ teaches us.

IT is natural to man to seek after something. There is always a want in the heart, and man seeks after that which he imagines will fill the void. Test this. Usually it is something that will ensure a better income, a position, influence; or maybe just the pleasure and joy of life, variety, excitement, the vogue of the present. Or it may be a loving heart seeks for love; it is ready to give, and yet it yearns for a return of affection. Whatever it may be, a man, worthy of the name of man, is seeking something, is keen after something.

But looking around us in the world, the last thing that would strike us would be that the chief thing that mankind was seeking was "the Kingdom of God." And yet that is the injunction of our Blessed Lord: "Seek ye therefore first the Kingdom of God." Seek it, yea, seek it first! Seek it above everything else! It is of no avail to own that the world at large utterly neglects this solemn word of Christ. The practical point is to ask ourselves—our own soul—are we seeking first this Kingdom of God? Is there not something else in our heart striving to be master there? Is there not something else that dominates our interest,

our time, our thoughts? About which we are more keen and anxious, more strenuous and determined, than gaining the Kingdom of God.

But you may object: What is this Kingdom of God? How have we to seek it? Can it be that we have to discard and reject the pursuits and pleasures of the world that lure us on, and are not satisfied without they are supreme in our heart, to banish them utterly and listen to what faith tells us of the Kingdom of God? The message of faith strikes us cold and numbs our heart; for we are told in the book that we dare not doubt nor disobey about the Kingdom of God. The gospel says: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven." Blessed are the meek: those that mourn: those that hunger and thirst after justice: the merciful, the clean of heart, the peacemakers: yea, "Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven" (Matt. v. 3, 10).

Such is the teaching of the God of Truth, God made man for our sakes. These words are in His first sermon, and did not His own life bear them out? He did not teach one thing, and do another. He was born in a stable—poor in spirit. He said, "Learn of Me, because I am meek, and humble of heart" (Matt. xi. 29). He was the Man of sorrows. He was merciful; and the peacemaker, for He came in His mercy to reconcile poor rebel sinners to His Father. He suffered persecution, even to the death of the Cross, and thus He won the Kingdom of heaven. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory?" (Luke xxiv. 26).

And the sacred book teaches us again, what would all the pleasures and glory of the world be to us (and how

little shall we ever gain of them!)?—for "the world passeth away" (1 John ii. 17). All that has enthralled the hearts of men with vain hopes is nothing more but merely the shortlived glory of a summer's day. Whereas we have immortal souls to satisfy; how can transient joys suffice for them? What a void there would be; and alas, how soon in our deluded souls! Peace and plenty, joy and comfort, friends and love around us only make the thought of death the more to be dreaded, and the leaving them all, the final separation, the more appalling.

Look through the dark and fearful vista of the future, the sacred book comes to our assistance once again. "Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world" (1 John ii. 15). Seek not this world and its joys and its vain happiness, but seek first the Kingdom of God, and then when life is over, what a revelation of glory there will be, a Kingdom of glorious eternity. The cross becomes the crown: the poor take possession of the Kingdom; the meek shall possess the land; those that have mourned and suffered shall rejoice; the merciful shall find mercy; the clean of heart shall see God; the peacemakers and those that have forgiven shall find forgiveness and a welcome to their Father's home; and those that have suffered for Christ's sake, theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.

Poor, unknown, despised on this earth, we may have been: obedient, humble, and contrite of heart, we have daily done our best to seek first the Kingdom of God, and death will reveal it to us that we have succeeded, and the blessed success will last for ever! No more anxiety and fear of falling into sin; no more crosses and afflictions. We shall be transformed into the children of light and glory, companions of the saints, surrounded

by the angels. Children of Mary, we shall then learn what it is to have the Queen of heaven for our Mother. We shall be welcomed by our Lord and Saviour, because we have obeyed His words in the holy book. And for ever we shall dwell with our Father in heaven, because we kept that word, "Seek ye therefore first the Kingdom of God."

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

HOW TO PERSEVERE

"And in doing good, let us not fail."—Gal. vi. 9.

1. How often have we failed! and why?
2. We must not remain failures.
3. We are weak, indeed, but strength is offered us.
4. The secret of perseverance—begin again and again.

How often has not this been our resolution—to be good and not to fail again! But what does our past life show us? Ah! the retrospect is one that may daunt the bravest heart. Our confessions make the revelation. How many, many times have we confessed in sorrow those things, in which we have failed, in spite of all our resolutions to be manful and persevere. The past has been a bitter and repeated disappointment to the best of us.

And why? Because, though we are poor, weak, erring creatures, we have placed too much reliance on ourselves. We thought that if we made up our minds, if we were determined, then we could start afresh and surely persevere. We forgot that we can do nothing, not even invoke the most holy name Jesus, without the grace of God; and for this grace we have humbly and continually to pray. We have failed, because, again, we became negligent in little things, not heeding the warning of Scripture, that he that despiseth little things shall fall by little and little. For instance, by shortening, omitting, or carelessly performing our devotions, we have paved the way for a failure.

Because, again, we have ventured too near a dangerous occasion of sin; dallied with a temptation; forgot the all-seeing eye of God, and to cry out, like Joseph tempted in Egypt, "How can I do this wicked thing, and sin against my God?" (Gen. xxxix. 9).

But however often we have failed in the past, it is imperative, absolutely necessary for us, for our soul's sake, not to remain failures. We must not dare to give up the attempt to try again. How can we, then, do better for the future, and begin, with some chance of success, to do good and not to fail? First, when we find we have failed, we must begin again at once. It is only wounded pride that makes us lose heart and despond. If we humble ourselves and turn to God, He, in His mercy, will make that very fall a means of a new beginning, and give us fresh strength. A good life is simply a continuous good beginning. God wishes us to be good, therefore He is ready and pleased to help us.

Rising up and beginning again at once after failing, and earnestly turning to God for help, are the means of doing good and not failing. Our Blessed Lord complained, "You will not come to Me that you may have life" (John v. 40). We choose to trust to ourselves, whereas our only hope is from Him. "Commit thy way to the Lord, and trust in Him, and He will do it" (Ps. xxxvi. 5). He will give us life; and what is life in a man, but strength of will, of purpose, and courage to make the endeavour to fulfil that purpose? We need not say that we cannot. That excuse will not hold at the Judgment—that we could not help failing—when all the time the grace to will and to do was offered us. The patient Saviour was waiting to be asked to give it us, and complaining that we would not come.

We starve our soul and let it perish of want, and wonder why we fail, and have not the power manfully to persevere. We look for our daily bread to sustain our bodily strength; and can we be excused for the folly of neglecting the daily bread of our souls? Prayer is nourishment for our souls, but a far greater and stronger nourishment is the most holy Eucharist. Our Lord has said, "He that eateth this bread shall live for ever." Ah! if we wish really to do good and not to fail, let us have devotion to the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. We gain strength, we prove our love for our Blessed Lord, and we give Him glory by receiving Holy Communion. Here is the strength that is offered us to enable us to persevere in doing good. We must not fear that we are trespassing on His kindness, as we are not fit or worthy to receive Him. No, we are not worthy: but our Blessed Lord "went about doing good to all," yea, even to those who He knew would fail Him many a time, and perhaps turn against Him. Come to Communion, to frequent, yea, daily Communion, and thus prove that you wish for His sake to have the good heart and strength to do good and not to fail. You will thus please our divine Lord; and be sure He will not fail you, but gladly will He give you the grace and strength that you may not fail Him.

So we see that the secret of perseverance is to begin again and again. And where shall we find the dispositions to wish to begin each day earnestly and zealously better than at the altar-rails? He comes to us there, who inspires us with the desire to be faithful and generous, and He comes to give us the strength to fulfil that desire, that purpose, that longing. Look back gratefully at the countless times that our Saviour has thus helped us to start afresh. Oh! what could have

made us tire of Him, and wish to leave Him and abandon Him? Of ourselves we might despair, but never of His goodness. Our time is growing short: let us begin again at once, and pray to persevere. No more to trust to ourselves—our good will or our strength—but wholeheartedly to trust to that good Lord, who would have us, for love of Him, to do good and not to fail.

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

CHRIST'S MIRACLES ON THE SABBATH DAY

"Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?"—LUKE xiv. 1.

1. Why our Lord worked so many miracles on the Sabbath day.
2. The seven miracles.
3. The lesson for ourselves.

THERE was a very special motive in our Blessed Lord's acting contrary to the Jewish law, in working cures on the Sabbath day. It was a rebuke to that spirit of keeping the letter of the law in such a hard and uncharitable way. Moreover, it was to show for all time the love and mercy that mankind could hope to receive on Sabbath days in the Church that He was to establish.

There are no less than seven occasions recorded in the gospel on which our Saviour worked miracles on the Sabbath. The first occurred in the synagogue at Capharnaum. "There was a man, who had an unclean devil, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying, Let us alone, what have we to do with Thee, Jesus of Nazareth? Art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee, Who Thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace and go out of him; and he went out of him and hurt him not at all" (Luke iv. 33). And immediately Jesus went from the synagogue to Simon's house. "And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever, and they besought Him for her. And standing over her, He

commanded the fever and it left her. And immediately rising, she ministered to them" (*ibid.* 38). And at sunset—that is, when the Sabbath was over—all that had any sick brought them to Him and He healed them.

The third event is thus recorded. "And there was a man, whose right hand was withered. And the Scribes and Pharisees watched Him if He would heal on the Sabbath day, that they might find an accusation against Him. But He knew their thoughts; and said to the man who had the withered hand: Arise, and stand forth in the midst. And rising he stood forth. And Jesus said to them: I ask you, if it be lawful on the Sabbath day to do good or to do evil; to save life, or to destroy? And looking round about on them all, He said to the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he stretched it forth, and his hand was restored. And they were filled with madness, and they talked one to another, what they might do to Jesus" (Luke vi. 6). This miracle is also recorded by St. Matthew (xii. 10) and St. Mark (iii. 1).

The fourth cure is thus related by St. Luke. "And He was teaching in their synagogue on the Sabbath. And behold there was a woman, who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years; and she was bowed together, neither could she look upwards at all. Whom, when Jesus saw, He called her unto Him, and said to her: Woman, thou art delivered from thy infirmity. And He laid His hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue being angry that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath day, answering said to the multitude, Six days there are wherein you ought to work; on them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath.

And the Lord answering him said: Ye hypocrites, doth not every one of you, on the Sabbath day, loose his ox or his ass from the manger and lead them to water? And ought not this daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day? And when He had said these things all His adversaries were ashamed; and all the people rejoiced for all the things that were gloriously done by Him" (Luke xiii. 11–18).

The very next chapter of St. Luke's is chosen for this day's gospel. You remember we are told that Jesus went into the house of a certain Pharisee; and they watched Him. What an invitation, full of guile and deceit! "And behold there was a certain man before Him, who had the dropsy." Jesus asked them in the words of the text, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day? But they held their peace. But He, taking him, healed him and sent him away" (Luke xiv. 1). And then our Lord rebuked them.

The six and seventh miracles are recorded by St. John. The scene is at the pool of Bethsaida, "where lay a great multitude of sick, of blind, of lame, of withered, waiting for the moving of the water. And an angel of the Lord descended at certain times into the pond, and the water was moved. And he that went down first into the pond, after the motion of the water, was made whole of whatsoever infirmity he lay under. And there was a certain man there, who had been eight and thirty years under his infirmity. Him when Jesus had seen lying, and knew that he had been there a long time, He saith to him, Wilt thou be made whole? The infirm man answered, Sir, I have no man to put me into the pond, and whilst I am coming, another goeth down before me. And Jesus said to him: Arise,

take up thy bed, and walk. And it was the Sabbath that day. Therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus" (John v. 2).

The seventh and last miracle took place immediately after the Jews had taken up stones to cast at Jesus. "But Jesus hid himself, and went out of the Temple." And passing by He saw a man blind from his birth. Persecuted, His life sought after, yet the Sacred Heart was heedful of the miseries of others. You remember our Lord said to him, "Go wash in the pool of Siloe." He went, he washed, he came back seeing! Now it was the Sabbath when Jesus opened his eyes. The Pharisees cross-questioned the man; rebuked him and cast him out of the synagogue because he spoke in defence of Jesus. Our Lord meeting him afterwards, revealed Himself to him as the Son of God, "and falling down he adored Him" (John ix. 1).

In all this manifold revelation of the tender love of Christ is there no lesson for ourselves? Yes, indeed: Sunday after Sunday are we not here present before Him? His merciful eyes are looking down upon our souls; ah! if we saw the state of our souls as He sees them, should we not recognize ourselves amongst those sad cases whom He cured on the Sabbath day? What He mercifully did then, He is willing and longing to do now during Holy Mass. Let us humbly own our infirmities, and beg of Him to make us whole, strong to re-enter His service, strong to persevere.

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

OUR BELIEF IN CHRIST

"Jesus asked them, saying, What think you of Christ?"—MATT. xxii. 41, 42.

1. Christ's question to the Jews and the world.
2. The glorious answer of the martyrs.
3. Now not open persecution, but insidious and false answers.
4. We by the loyalty of our lives have to proclaim what we think of Christ.

THE prophets had announced the coming of the Redeemer. The Jewish nation expected Him, and yet, when He came, what reception did they give Him? They disbelieved in Him; they rejected Him. He challenged them, "What think you of Christ?" If you believe not My words, acknowledge the deeds that I have done in your midst. The evil spirits, that He had cast out of those possessed, cried out, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God!" But "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." Had they not taunted Him that He was a Samaritan and had a devil? How different was that noble answer that Peter gave Him, when our Lord had asked, "But whom do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered and said: Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. xvi. 15, 16).

This same question has been demanded of the world, age after age. And as Christ our Lord triumphed in suffering, so the most glorious answers have been given

in the days of persecution. Not a verbal answer merely, but with their lives, amidst all manners of torments, unterrified by the rack, the scourgings, the fires, the wild beasts in the Coliseum, the martyrs gave their answer, professed Christ the Son of God; gloried in being the followers of the Crucified one, and gladly gave up their lives to seal their faith. How crowds of holy witnesses rise up before our memories—children, maidens, mothers, old men, rich and poor for three hundred years by their death proclaimed their faith in " Christ, the Son of the living God."

And when peace dawned and the Church was allowed to extend and propagate, alas! heresies sprung up. What then did men think of Christ? Arius denied His Divinity. His heresy spread like a devastating plague, and the world " groaned to find itself Arian." Other heresies followed, each with its false assertions in their answer to " What think you of Christ?" And yet the truth prevailed. The Gospel tidings were received by nation after nation converted to the Faith, and through successive centuries up to the Reformation, the world at large gave the one universal answer, " Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God."

Though the powers of hell cannot prevail against Christ and His Church, yet the insidious warfare continues unremittingly, and a nation here, a nation there, falls away and denies its Redeemer, for a time leading astray and ruining the souls of men. " What think you of Christ?" Some years ago an atheistic catechism answered: Christ was a working man, and a socialist. And Unitarians deny that He is God, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity. And at the present time how mistaken is the faith of those who openly declare that Christ's teaching is obsolete, that it needs reforming

and bringing up to date! Man daring to aspire to improve the work of the Eternal God! Man, the creature of a passing hour, to sit in judgment on the doctrine of eternal truth!

Living, as we do, in such times as these, it is to us, to each one of us, that our Blessed Lord addresses the question once again, "What think you of Christ?" and He looks to us to boldly proclaim an answer that will glorify Him. We cannot shirk the answer. We are Christ's, and we have to respond in word and deed, by the profession of our faith, and by our lives that live up to our faith. Alas! some by their sinful lives cry out as of old, and prefer Barabbas to Christ.

But we ourselves, children of the Church, we who have been redeemed by His precious Blood, give a loyal and abiding answer before the world of our unswerving faith in Christ, the Son of God. Our faith, our hope, our love, our devotedness to Him proclaim the answer. We stand by every word He spoke: we adhere to His every doctrine, handed down to us in sacred Tradition by His Church. We worship Him and receive Him in the Holy Eucharist, proving our faith by loving obedience to His word, "Do this in memory of Me."

What an example we each can be, in our little world, to those who as yet know Him not, and to those who have once professed their faith in Christ, but now have fallen away. Let our lives convey to them, impress even unwilling souls, what we think of Christ our Lord, that we believe that He is the God of Truth, Who became Man to teach us the way to heaven by word and example, that He freed us from the yoke of sin by His Redemption, that we might begin a new life, walking in His footsteps. Let them see, make them see, that

He is all in all to us—our light, our strength, the motive of all our endeavours and endurance. This is what we think of Christ. Knowing Him, remembering Him constantly here in this life makes us faithful to Him now, buoyed up with the glorious hope that we shall reign with Him for ever in the life to come.

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

THE STATE OF GRACE

"The grace of God that is given to you in Christ Jesus."—1 Cor. i. 4.

1. Grace, life of our soul; security of salvation.
2. Signs that we are in the state of grace: the testimony of our conscience, that we have repented; fraternal charity; light illuminating our soul.
3. Preserve grace by humility and holy fear.

Grace is the gift of God and the life of our soul. By it we participate in the divine nature. If we preserve our souls in the state of grace in life, we make certain of our everlasting reward and glory hereafter. Grace is given to us by God freely, lovingly, generously; our solicitude and daily endeavour must be to preserve it in our souls. But how few of us value it as we should! In the world how many do not believe in grace: reject it for a whim, a pleasure, an indulgence of their passions! And yet it is the all-important thing for each of us to preserve our soul in the state of grace. Yet can we know for sure whether we are in the state of grace?—for Scripture tells us that man knows not whether he be worthy of love or hatred—that is, whether he be in the favour and friendship of God, or whether sin has driven grace from his soul, and left it "poor and miserable and naked" in the sight of His heavenly Father.

True, we cannot know for certain; but there are signs, which guarantee us a moral certainty, sufficient for a

solid hope to be built on it, that we are friends with God, and have grace within our souls. "The grace of God that is given to you in Christ Jesus." Let us examine these signs, these tests, to help us to be solicitous and earnest in treasuring this heavenly gift.

The first is the testimony of our conscience. Conscience acknowledges that we have sinned, but can also claim that we have done that which is required for sin to be forgiven; that we need not fear that those sins of which we have repented can be our accusers at the Judgment. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity" (1 John i. 9). This testimony of our conscience is one of the greatest tests of grace, because we are only judged according to our conscience. We must "endeavour to have always a conscience without offence towards God and towards man" (Acts xxiv. 16).

The second sign or test that we are in the state of grace, given us both by St. Leo the Great and St. Augustine, is fraternal charity. Truly, if we have God within us by His grace, how can we not have a little of the love and charity of God towards our brethren, the well-beloved children of the same Father? St. John tells us, "If God hath so loved us, we also ought to love one another. . . . If we love one another, God abideth in us, and His charity is perfected in us" (1 John iv. 11, 17). "We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren" (*ibid.* iii. 14). And what is the life of our soul but "the grace of God, given to us in Christ Jesus"? Fraternal charity indeed is the great sign, the moral certitude of predestination, that the grace of God exists supreme in our soul. "As fire produces heat," says

St. Bruno, "so grace produces charity." Charity diffuses itself to all and in all things, simply for the love of God. We see God in the poor, the suffering, the dying and the souls in purgatory, and it is to Him, through them, that we extend our sympathy, our kindness, and our help. And if we are thus charitable for God's sake is it not that we love Him, or, at least, are striving to love Him? And to love God—is not that a sign, a test, a sure proof that we are already in the grace of God?

Remember the example of that religious, an ordinary religious as far as man could judge, who, when dying, knew no terror or anguish. His eyes were raised upwards so calmly, so hopefully, there was evidence of such peace of soul, that his superior asked him, was there no cause of sorrow or fear from the past? It is very true, the dying man replied, I have been careless and tepid, yet in spite of past infidelities I die in peace, because I have never judged my brethren, and I have the word of Jesus Christ, "Judge not, and thou shalt not be judged." My God, pardon me, as I have pardoned others; bear me no ill-will, as I have borne none to others; forget my sins and iniquities, as I have forgotten anything that others have done to me. Grant me measure for measure; pity for pity; kindness for kindness. What a testimony does fraternal charity thus bear to our souls, that we are in the state of grace!

The last sign to be mentioned is this, and it grows out of the two preceding tests. If our conscience has not to reproach us with sin; if the love of God is urging us to the practice of fraternal charity, a light, a heavenly light illuminates our souls, revealing to us the nothingness, the paltriness, the vileness of this world and of

all that it can offer us; and revealing to us, on the other hand, the beauty of the life of grace, giving us a relish of the supernatural, our prayers, our Holy Communions, yea, even a love of patient suffering, and a longing desire for heaven. Thus the light of grace leads us safely along the humble path that leads to life eternal. Let us pray for holy fear, lest we should lose reverence and care for the preservation of grace within us. How this life seems to fade away and lose all fascination to attract us; and how near the brightness of heaven seems, because of "the grace that is given to us in Christ Jesus."

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

THE CALLS OF GRACE

"They that were invited were not worthy."—MATT. xxii. 8.

1. Gospel reminds us of the many calls and invitations of grace.
2. Why God is so generous? Because He loves us.
3. How have we responded?
4. Resolve to treasure God's graces.

THIS gospel reminds us of the manifold invitations, the countless calls of grace, wherewith we are favoured by our loving Lord and Saviour. Here in God's church we cannot help but remember them. How often has He spoken to us those words, "Come to Me, all you that labour and are burdened: and I will refresh you" (Matt. xi. 28). At another time, when He has seen us wasting the short and precious hours of life, He has bidden us, "Go you also into My vineyard, and I will give you what shall be just" (Matt. xx. 4). And when our souls have yearned for Him, wishing to give themselves devoutly to Him, He has said, as He did to St. Andrew, "Come and see" (John i. 39), and we have known where to find His home here in the tabernacle where He is waiting, always ready, to welcome us and bid us stay with Him.

And why all these merciful invitations? He has no need of us. He is supremely blessed and happy without us. There are so many countless multitudes better than we are. Have they been as favoured as we feel that we have been? Then why these calls of

grace to us? They are purely out of benevolence. "He is the Lord, who loveth souls."

If it were not our Lord Himself, Who tells us how His calls and invitations are received, we could not believe that human nature could be so perverse, so ungrateful. The gospel tells us first that some refused: "they would not come." Others promised, perhaps half meant to accept, but "they neglected." Others—can it be possible?—insulted, outraged, and even put to death the servants who brought the Master's invitation.

How have we responded to the invitations of Almighty God? Please God, we have not outraged His mercy by insulting His ministers and by rebelliously disobeying His Church, as those do who neglect their Easter duties. Again, please God, we have not "refused," daringly saying, "I will not." But who is there that can plead not guilty to "neglecting"? Who is there that has not put God off? Another time will do for the service of God, at present the claims of the world are very pressing. Business has to be attended to; friends are importunate; health, leisure, pleasure all urge their claims. Some other time we will respond to God! He, Who gives us time and life, is begrudged a little of the time which we owe to His lovingkindness. Sometime, as we know well, is repeatedly no time: to-morrow never comes! To-day is the time to respond to God. Think for a moment the insult it is to keep God waiting for an answer. Every good resolution that, through God's grace, we have made, and that on looking back we see has come to naught, is a proof of our neglect. We began, but we neglected.

There are some who may try to excuse themselves

by urging that many others have had better chances; more frequent calls of grace, opportunities of practising piety denied to them; but none of us can truly say that we have not been invited and pressed to join God's service. Does not the gospel tell us, that the servants were at length sent out to bring in all that they could find, both good and bad? So we must have neglected or even resisted, or we should have found ourselves amongst the servants of God. Let us resolve now to take that word of St. Paul's, "I cast not away the grace of God" (Gal. ii. 21), and make it our own, and with a firm, resolute will promise, "I will never again cast away the grace of God."

Our Blessed Lord's parable tells us how the Master, hurt and grieved, complained, "They that were invited were not worthy." Let us pray for holy fear lest we be found unworthy; for a holy anxiety to look to ourselves carefully lest we neglect. We must beware of being self-satisfied. We see others, as we may think, worse than ourselves, but have they received as many graces and calls as we have? And if they are more negligent, more guilty than ourselves, how does that make us stand better in the sight of God? Again, let us not be self-satisfied by any little good that we may have done, which, very likely, is far outbalanced by our shortcomings and our faults. Take heed by the example of those who thought they would be well received by their divine Master. They had forgotten their neglect and putting God off till it was too late. The five foolish virgins came to the marriage festival after the door was shut. They were too late. The gospel says, "But at last also came the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But He answering said, Amen, amen, I say to you, I know you not"

(Matt. xxv. 11). And remember those others of whom our Lord said: "Many will say to Me in that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and cast out devils in Thy name, and done many miracles in Thy name? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me, you that work iniquity" (Matt. vii. 22).

Is not this enough to make us humble and ready to accept God's graces; to welcome His invitations; to be careful to respond to them; and to do our utmost day after day? If we do this and persevere loyally, zealously, we shall indeed hear a very different word from the Master, a blessed welcome indeed! "Then shall the King say to them, Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the Kingdom prepared for you" (Matt. xxv. 34).

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

THE SAFEGUARD OF OUR SOUL

"Lord, come down before that my son die."—JOHN iv. 49.

1. The father's cry for his son.
2. How the cry of our soul, "Come down," is answered.
3. What excuse can we make, if not safeguarded?
4. Our desire must be increased.

THE gospel narrative to-day is simple and touching. The ruler loved his son, and was sorely grieved that he was losing him. Opportunely he heard that our Blessed Lord had come from Judea to Galilee. He hastened therefore to Him; and the cry of his heart went forth, full of faith and trusting hope: Lord, come down and heal my son. And when our Saviour chided him that unless he saw signs and wonders he believed not, the father's heart, not minding the rebuke, persevered in the prayer: "Lord, come down before that my son die."

Have we not something that we should cherish even more than that father did his son? Should not our prayer be more earnest and persevering than that father's? Ours should be, "Lord, come down before that my soul die." And how this prayer of poor fallen man has been heard! God the Son came down from heaven and became Man to succour the soul of man. He taught it; He comforted it; He blessed it, and redeemed it. He, Who was the glory of heaven, came down, and became the Crucified Victim of Calvary for us. And lest in succeeding ages the

memory of this atonement should grow dim, and lose its power over the hearts of men, the loving Lord perpetuated this Sacrifice, this oblation of Himself for man, lest that our soul should die. Faithful hearts gather round the altar, and their cry is, "Come down." During all these centuries, day after day, in every church the miracle of miracles is worked, and at the words of consecration in the Mass, Christ our Lord, true God, true Man, comes down in His Mercy and His love. Here is our salvation! What Calvary did, the Mass can do! The work of our redemption is renewed lest our souls die. For a moment reflect; what earnestness, devotion, gratitude should be ours for the daily Holy Mass. Christ comes down to heal us, strengthen us, to make our hearts live for and tend to their eternal destiny.

Come down! Yes, daily upon our altars, and yet the Sacred Heart of Jesus is not content. There is another yearning, another longing that inflames it. Come down, He bids us pray again. Come down, dear Lord, into the very depths of our poor souls, come down and heal them in Holy Communion. Have we no pity for our own poor souls, that are dying—frail, languishing, wasting for nourishment and health and strength? And our Blessed Lord comes down to us, saying to us, "I am the Bread of life. . . . If any man eat of this Bread he shall live for ever" (John vi. 48, 52). All that is wanting is our desire and longing to come to Him to be healed.

What shall we answer to Christ the Judge if our souls die? It will be all our own fault. No shadow of an excuse. No one upon whom to lay the blame except our own selves. We may say we were tempted by the devil; but here was our Lord to succour us. We

were weak and sinful; yes, and we neglected to seek strength and holiness here in the Blessed Sacrament. We were busy and occupied with many cares and the pursuits of the world; ah! had we not time to secure eternity? Passing pleasures of an hour were more thought of than the eternal joys of heaven, of which the Blessed Eucharist is the token and the pledge.

Our divine Lord is longing to come to us; but we, alas! have little longing or desire to come to Him. Where is our faith, our hope, our love for Him? Where is the fear within us lest our soul should die? It humbles us to remember the devotedness of others, and how in response to the cry of their hearts, our Saviour has come and made His abode with them, and transformed them into saints. Yes, they have become saints because they were anxious about their souls, and their faith taught them how their souls could be safeguarded. The cry of their heart was, "Lord, come down"; they knew they could not do without Him. And the safety, the growth, the perfecting of their souls was in this—that our Lord had come with His blessed healing and nourishing, and had stayed with them. His Presence made them realize more and more His blessings and His love, and then on their part their desire and longing for Him and wholehearted response to His graces grew more and more.

Mass and Holy Communion must not become matters of custom and habit, and there is here a great danger, especially for the young and thoughtless. But they must be so prepared for and longed for each day, that this love of receiving our divine Lord may be intensified each time. We are humbled, when we think of the devotion of the saints that we read of. How

St. Gerard, a mere little boy, longed so for his Lord that St. Michael the Archangel brought him his first Communion. How the Sacred Host left the altar and came of itself to St. Catherine of Siena at the end of the church.

Each time at Holy Communion let us try to learn to be more devout. And thus we shall come to be prepared for that last and final visit, when our days on earth are drawing to a close, and in response to our dying cry, " Lord, come down," the Holy Viaticum will be brought to us, and for the last time on earth our wistful eyes will look upon our Blessed Lord in the Holy Eucharist! Soon to behold Him in His glory in that eternal home whither He will lead us.

Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost

FRATERNAL CHARITY

"Shouldst not thou then have had compassion also on thy fellow-servant?"—MATT. xviii. 33.

1. We are keen to obtain God's forgiveness.
2. But how different are we towards others!
3. A test of holiness is this fraternal charity.
4. God so willingly forgives, if we are kind.

WE have all needed this reprimand, and most of us many a time. "Shouldst not thou then have had compassion also on thy fellow-servant?" What different kind of people we are, when asking forgiveness and when we are asked to forgive! At confession how anxious to be forgiven; shortly afterwards how harsh and unkind and fault-finding to others! We forget God's mercy is granted to us in the same measure that we give it to others.

Little things betray the spirit of our hearts in this respect. It is no excuse that they are only little things. There is nothing that is really little, that is for God or against God. Besides, if we are resentful and bitter about small matters, how can we reasonably expect to be forgiving, kind, and charitable when we have serious reason to be hurt and offended? For the safety of our soul we have to watch small failings in this matter of fraternal charity.

Naturally we are very prone and ready to fail in charity. We are keen to notice; to think evil; to repeat and exaggerate anything against another; self-love easily

takes offence, and the offence rankles, and brotherly love is ruined. Whereas, with the aid of prayer, and with the grace of God, we should constantly try to be charitable; thinking no evil; saying no unkind word; doing kindnesses even to those who have been unkind to us. Above all, to be ready to forgive from the heart whatever may have been said or done against us. In this matter we have either to mean and try to be saints, or we shall, eventually, find ourselves reprimanded and punished by our Master, Jesus Christ.

Take what the saints have done and said. The great St. Teresa prays thus: "Forgive us, O Lord, not because of our prayers and good deeds, but because we have forgiven." When Blessed Juvenal Ancina was dying, poisoned by an enemy, he not only refused to mention the name of the assassin, whom he knew well, but strictly forbade that any inquiry should be made to lead to his punishment. And St. John Gualbertus, about to kill the murderer of his brother, at the sign and mention of the Cross, forgave him from his heart. And this was the turning-point—a proud young nobleman changed into a saint.

Not only were the saints ready to forgive, but they practised active and kindly charity amongst the poor, the sick, and the afflicted. When we read the lives of holy men we cannot help but be struck by this humble and penitential habit. Even exalted personages and profound scholars steal time from their other labours to visit hospitals and the poor in their homes. This is one of the surest marks of real holiness. And others, again, devoted their whole lives to such work and founded religious Orders to perpetuate their labours. Oh! they had compassion on their fellow-servants. Call to mind St. Vincent of Paul. Who shall ever tell

all that has been done in his life and since his death, by himself and those he taught to succour human misery? Their name is legion who have followed in his footsteps. And St. Camillus, the patron of a holy death, whose holy calling it was to tend the dying, winning poor sinners over in his hospitals to repent and die in peace. These are the heroes of charity, and so many more that could be named, and whom you of yourselves will remember. Heroes of charity, who loved to tend the most loathsome diseases, and whose touch wrought so many miraculous cures. We cannot be like them—heroes, but we can and must pray to have a little of their spirit of kindness and compassion.

We must be determined and ready to meet the trials of life with resignation and serenity, and being kind to others in their necessities and miseries will bring this grace to our own souls. We cannot help it; suffering is like our shadow—we cannot get away from it. But being mindful and tender towards the sufferings of others will enable us to bear our own with fortitude and hope. St. Laurence the Martyr first saw to the poor and afflicted, distributed the Church's treasures to them, and with the sign of the Cross opened the eyes of the blind; and then when roasted slowly to death, God blessed him so that the flames were like roses to him, and happily and triumphantly he died for Christ. This is how God blesses compassion and fraternal charity.

For ourselves let us take consolation from this thought: God seems blind to our failings, as long as He sees kindness to others in our hearts. He gives us Himself as an example. He was meekness itself; He went about doing good to all; He loved to be amongst the poor; and of all that were diseased, do we read of

one being sent away uncured? And His blessed Mother is like to Him, as we should expect. We salute her as Queen of Heaven, but a title she loves better is "Mother of Mercy." How often have we stood in need of her pity and her help, and how often again shall we receive it, for she will ask our Lord for us, and she cannot be denied, if only she sees us striving to be to each other kind, and charitable, and merciful, and compassionate.

Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost

HOW TO IMPROVE

"He Who hath begun a good work in you will perfect it."—PHIL. i. 6.

1. Everything good in us is from God.
2. It is for us to treasure and work with His graces.
3. Practically, we must do all—with a good intention, with exactitude, with fervour.
4. And God will perfect the good work.

SURELY we are all wise enough and humble enough to know and confess that there is nothing good in us from ourselves. We have learned that from sad experience of our many failings and infidelities. We are full of love of self, and of ease and comfort; we are uncharitable, cowardly, ungrateful, and yet within us there is something good. Ah! that is from God. He gives us this desire for something better; this remembrance of His gracious goodness, how He has given us the faith; implanted the hope of heaven in our heart; and made us conscious that He himself, the great God, is asking and longing for our love. He hath begun the good work in us.

It is for us to treasure those graces. We must not receive them like an ungracious child, and never say a word of thanks to our Father. How many of His favours, His forgivenesses, and opportunities for good have we sinfully wasted in the past! The proof of gratitude for graces is to make use of them and work with them. To receive blessings and favours is only

the beginning: the work of our life is to correspond to them.

Then what does Almighty God expect from us? First to refer everything to Him. By a pure and holy intention to offer Him all our thoughts, words, actions, and sufferings. They may be poor things indeed, but coming from a child they are accepted and blessed by our Father. And this good intention would certainly keep us from anything unworthy and sinful, for how could we dare to offer that to our heavenly Father! Thus we see we have to renew this pure intention and offering to God many a time, for how often do sudden gusts of temper, of temptation sweep us from the path of perfection! But we must never despond. What God loves is that we should at once begin again, trusting that He will help us.

Another thing that God expects from us is that all we do for Him should be done with exactitude and promptness. Our work for God must not be done slovenly. Our self-respect would forbid us to act thus to our betters, even to one another: then how dare we treat God with disrespect! Duties have their fixed hours, and duties to God, then, must not be put off or curtailed. And punctuality is true politeness; then to Whom should we be polite if not to the Almighty? How many of our prayers and Mass attendances have been so spoiled by want of exactitude and punctuality! Promptitude shows a good and willing heart.

To persevere in acting up to grace requires, then, a pure intention, exactitude, and finally fervour. This is a devout disposition of heart, which enables us to offer to God our thoughts and our prayers with earnestness, zeal, and love. One devout Hail Mary from the heart is of more worth than a rosary hastily slurred over

with a distracted mind. And here again, the good intention comes to our help. A moment's thought! and we should remember Whom we are addressing, and in Whose presence we are. We may be on our knees, but our hearts are not worshipping. The thought of our great needs and necessities; the thought that the great God in heaven is listening to us, the thought that we are supplicating help through Jesus Christ our Lord, Who died for us, Who purchased these blessings that we are imploring, and Who, perhaps, is present on the altar before us—this thought should make us reverent and fervent.

We have help, too, given us by our Blessed Saviour, to keep us fervent and to increase our devotion. One such help that should spur us on is to remember purgatory. There all the penalties for remissness and carelessness have to be purged away in sufferings far greater than we can picture to ourselves here on earth. What a dreadful store of punishment are we, perhaps, accumulating for ourselves now! God knows. But would not this thought check us in our tepidity and sloth? Would it not spur us on to do our very utmost, praying and working, with zeal and generosity of heart?

Another and a more consoling help is to call on our Mother Mary, " our life, our sweetness, and our hope." We offer up our prayers through her: surely, then, we should offer her of our best. And how transformed our poor prayers will be when they have passed through the hands of Mary Immaculate! She will not despise our petitions. She lovingly accepts every little prayer. And more than that: she prompts us to pray, and blesses our hearts with fervour and persevering love.

This life is the time for tilling and sowing the seed; the harvest-time comes later, when God perfects the

good work. Look forward to that time, and we shall be strong and manly in acting up to God's graces and blessings. The wonder to us will be that our little efforts, our poor, faulty prayers, our beginning again at once after every failure, have been received and blessed by God; that day after day He has led us on to persevere, perfecting the good work, making us "sincere and without offence" until the day of recompense shall come. Our pure intention—all for God, our careful exactitude, our fervour have led us on safely to persevere "through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost

THE HOLY VIATICUM

"Come, lay Thy hand upon her, and she shall be safe."—MATT. ix. 18.

1. The one thing necessary for us is a holy death.
2. The thrice-told miracle.
3. We, too, must pray and desire the Lord to come.
4. Then our soul shall be safe.

THERE is one thing that should be the constant theme of our prayers: the one thing above all to be desired. A good life must be crowned by a holy death. And we have confidence in this, that our Blessed Lord will graciously hear our prayers. "Thou hast given him his heart's desire; and hast not withholden from him the will of his lips" (Ps. xx. 2).

We have such a perfect model before us in this day's gospel in the ruler, who besought our Blessed Lord to come to his daughter, who was at the point of death. His faith, his earnest entreaty is pictured before us three times over, as SS. Matthew, Mark, and Luke each give us an account of this miracle that was granted to the father's desire and prayer. Our Saviour was so touched that at once, to allay the father's fears, He said, "Fear not, only believe, and she shall be safe. And Jesus rising up, followed him with His disciples." A delay occurred through the woman that touched the hem of Christ's garment, and our Lord speaking to her. The father's fears redoubled, and friends hastened to meet him, saying: "Thy daughter is dead; why dost thou

trouble the Master any further? But Jesus . . . saith, Fear not, only believe" (Mark v. 35). That father's faith and earnestness were rewarded by his child being raised to life and restored to him.

We have something more precious to us than that young maiden was to her father. Does it not shame us to remember his love for her, and his faith in Christ our Lord, contrasted with our apathy about our souls? Where is our daily earnest prayer, our anxiety about the state of our souls, whether dangerous, dying, or dead? Do we fall at our Lord's feet, praying Him to come into our house?

If we were ill, you will say, we should pray thus, and be as anxious as that father was. No, the preparation for a holy death is not made when we come to die. It is during life that we should prepare for the end. If we have little or no desire, no fervent longing for Holy Communion during life, we shall not have it when we come to die. Each Communion should be a preparation for the last one. And oh, how much depends on our Blessed Lord coming to us then! For so great a favour, is it not well worth to pray for it day after day? Each time we receive our Blessed Lord in the Holy Eucharist our most earnest prayer and desire should be, that He will come to us at the end, and then our soul "shall be safe."

How the saints longed for that safeguard when death approached! St. Benedict had himself borne to the church, and, supported in the arms of his brethren, standing before the altar after receiving His Master and his true King Christ, he gave up his soul to God. A fitting end for such a blessed life. And St. Thomas Aquinas, when the Holy Viaticum was brought to him, though dying, raised himself and knelt and prayed aloud,

" I firmly believe that Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, is present in this most holy sacrament. I receive Thee, the price of my soul's ransom, I receive Thee, the Viaticum of my soul's pilgrimage. Thou, O Christ, art the King of glory, Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father." And so needful and precious is it to our souls to receive the Holy Viaticum that St. Mary Magdalen was transported by a miracle from her hermitage to receive It ere she died.

If hitherto we have been careless and negligent in this respect—seldom thinking and praying for a holy death, and piously longing that our Lord in His sweet mercy may come to us at the end, let us begin at once, heartily, fervently to make it our daily supplication. Our divine Lord longs to save us, but He does expect to be asked, to be implored, to be desired and yearned for. Let us pray like that father in the gospel, and say like David, " O God, I have declared to Thee my life. Thou hast set my tears in Thy sight. In what day soever I shall call upon Thee, behold, I know that Thou art my God. In God I have hoped . . . because Thou hast delivered my soul from death; that I may please in the sight of God, in the light of the living " (Ps. lv. 9, 13).

Prepare in life, pray in life, for at our last illness, through misery, pain, and weakness, there may be little zest for prayer. The faithful Lord will remember all the supplications and holy desires and He will come to us, with Peter and James and John, as the gospel says, typifying faith and hope and charity, and our soul shall be safe. The words with which the priest administers Holy Viaticum show us the danger of that hour, and how, indeed, we need an almighty guardian. The priest holding the Blessed Sacrament, which is

given to us as the food of the wayfarer, for our soul's journey to the other world, says, " Receive, brother, the Viaticum of the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who may guard thee from the malignant enemy and lead thee to life everlasting."

Thus our dear Redeemer comes to our soul that it may be safe and may live. Yes, this life may pass away, but our soul's life is just beginning—the eternal blessed life, to which our Lord will lead it. That blessed life which we shall pass in beholding, glorifying, loving our good God, our Saviour for ever and for ever.

Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

THE HOLY SACRIFICE

"My words shall not pass."—MATT. xxiv. 35.

1. The wonderful words that Christ has spoken to us each Sunday of the year.
2. There is one the Church has specially taken and obeyed day after day.
3. By obeying this word our Redemption is renewed daily.
4. And the faithful partake in this Sacrifice ordained by Christ.

ON this the last Sunday of the ecclesiastical year, the gospel ends, "But My words shall not pass." The wonderful words of our Lord, which we have heard each Sunday of the year, arise before our minds. We have listened to His doctrines and teachings, the parables of all kinds, with which we are so familiar; His warnings and rebukes; yea, and His sweet words of love—"I am the good Shepherd," "Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee," "I will, be thou made clean," and so many more.

But amongst all the words, there is one that the Church has taken to heart, and has never let pass, but day after day has kept it faithfully. By just keeping this one word, the Church and each of us obeys Him, in faith and hope and love. This obedience proves our faith in His Divinity, our hope in His Redemption, our love because we trust in His continued mercy. He said, the night before He died, "Do this, for a commemoration of Me" (Luke xxii. 19). Oh! word of

love, of infinite and individual love! It has never been forgotten; never for a day disobeyed. How the Church treasures this blessed word, by obeying which the Sacrifice of Calvary is renewed morning after morning on the altars of many thousands of churches, and has been since the days of the Apostles. This word is His own, though uttered by His priests; this word is as efficacious and powerful now as when He instituted the Holy Eucharist, the divine sacrament of His Body and Blood. This word shall never pass, because He promised to be with us till the consummation of the world.

The obeying this divine word, "Do this, for a commemoration of Me," is the very life of the Church. The mission of the Church, its very existence, which is guaranteed to it by God, is simply that it may save souls. And our Blessed Saviour has by this word given it the power to bring His Redemption home to the souls of men. To know and believe all the other words of Christ, and yet stop at this, reminds us of Moses beholding the vision of the promised land, yet not allowed to enter in. What excuse can men make for not accepting this word, the very culmination of the mercy of God, if they believe the other words of Christ our Lord? Why did He declare that He was the Bread of Life, and work miracles—multiplying the loaves to emphasize His teaching, if the Bread of Life was never to exist? Why did He say to His disciples, "This is My Body: This is My Blood," and gave to them to eat and drink thereof, if that was to be the solitary and only consecration and Communion? If men disobey this word, "Do this for a commemoration of Me," no wonder they are driven to deny His other words, "This is My Body," and dare to maintain that, though He

said these words, He did not mean them. His divine Presence in the Holy Eucharist is denied and disbelieved.

What becomes of all the words of Christ, if one or other can be passed over and denied? The man that doubts or disbelieves one is leaving Christ. "Then Jesus said to the twelve: Will you also go away? And Simon Peter answered Him: Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John vi. 68, 69). The words of eternal life! How loyally we must cling to this! And how providentially—arranged by the all-wise God indeed—it is that every member of the Church can prove by deed that he accepts and stands by the words of Christ that can never pass. A poor, humble Catholic may not be able to argue, and there is no need to argue—he simply comes to Holy Mass. And by so doing he is saying like Peter, "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of life." And why does he kneel before the altar? He is waiting for the priest to obey the Lord Jesus, Who said, "Do this for a commemoration of Me." And that Catholic man or woman or child looks up to the altar, and awaits devoutly the coming of the Lord. The word is spoken; the consecration takes place; and Jesus our Lord, Who died to save us from our sins, is there upon the altar, in the priest's hands raised up for adoration, and with the same love and power as on Calvary. He offers Himself once again for us! And the Catholic's faith, hope, love is given to His Lord, and his heart and soul raised up with His Saviour's to the Eternal Father.

Let us learn to treasure this divine word of Christ more and more. If we believe in this we believe in all; if we reverence it, obey it, and love it, we reverence,

obey, and love all the words that lead to everlasting life. In action, perhaps daily action, we can prove how we do this by attending Holy Mass. The blessed result of attending Mass! Each day our love and loyalty will increase. We are the children of the Lord, so why should we be kept from His table? So humbly and reverently we shall begin to receive Holy Communion frequently, yea, daily. And each Communion is a pledge of future glory; we are the children of the inheritance: how it becomes us to walk piously, faithfully through life, rejoicing that, united to the Church, we are daily doing this for a commemoration of Him, Who lives in the Holy Eucharist for love of us.

All Saints

ETERNAL REWARD

"Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven."—Matt. v. 12.

1. This Festival is a vision of the world to come.
2. The encouragement of the example of the saints.
3. The gospel explains the foundation of their holiness.
4. Their interest in us, and their help.

All Saints is a great and consoling festival for each of us, who believes what he learned in the Catechism as a child: "God made me to know Him, love Him, and serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him for ever in the next." Yes, it is the vision of the next world, blessed and glorious, that lifts up our souls to-day. We behold the multitude of those blessed ones, who in life knew, loved, and served God, and are now happy with Him for ever in their Father's home. It is not merely the festival of the great saints of God, whose names and lives we know and venerate, but of every man, woman, and child whose piety and fidelity have been rewarded with the crown of life. In humble hope and yet with loving confidence we too may count upon that reward, for God is faithful, if we now in life strive strenuously to know, love, and serve Him.

The example of the saints should encourage us, in spite of our past sins and negligences and weakness and cowardice. What they did by the grace of God we too may accomplish with the help of that same

grace, which will never be wanting to us if we pray for it. True, the heroism of the martyrs, hermits, apostolic men may daunt us, but we must remember that it was by the power of God's grace they became the great saints whom we venerate. It was not the great actions and events of their lives that made them saints, but because they were so holy that they became famous.

The foundations of their holiness we read of in the gospel to-day. "Blessed are the poor," said our Lord, not only despising what the world could offer them, but the poor in spirit—that is, cultivating humility and the fear of God. "Blessed are the meek," those who forgive and bear no resentment. "Blessed are those that mourn," mindful of their sins and wasted opportunities. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after justice," putting God first in all things in their daily lives. "Blessed are the merciful," for God takes as done to Himself all kindnesses done even to the least of our brethren. "Blessed are the clean of heart," for those who refrain from all taint of evil and act with a pure intention are rewarded, "for they shall see God." "Blessed are the peacemakers," thus imitating our Lord Himself. "Blessed are they who suffer persecution," and our Saviour warned His followers that this would be their portion, for the world hates those who are not of the world, for theirs is the Kingdom of God. These things are the foundations of the holiness of the saints. And the more faithful in their observance, and in cultivating their spirit, the more holy they became in life, and the more blessed now, "for great is their reward in heaven."

It is on such a day as this that we realize the transforming power of God's grace. What the world makes no account of, what it might sneer at and

despise, if done with a pure intention and for the love of God, is precious in His sight. Obedience, forgivingness, kindliness, humility—little thought of, yea, perhaps ridiculed in this world, are the secret springs of holiness, that have raised up countless thousands to become the saints of God.

Though now secure and blessed and glorious in heaven, the saints are deeply interested in our welfare and endeavours to serve God. Their Lord and Master loves us, died for us, is offered on our altars for us, as He loved and died for them. He nourishes us, as He did them, in His tender mercy, with His own sacred Body and Blood. For His sake, then, for His glory, they are willing, yea, anxious, to help to save us by their example and their prayers.

We see why they are interested in us—because we are the redeemed of Christ. Our worth is what we are: and we are Christ's, and He ransomed us at a great price. And though we may have defiled our souls with many sins and much neglect, nevertheless we are worth the precious Blood of our Redeemer, for that has been given for us. For God has so loved the souls of men! And the saints are most anxious that we should remember this, and with all earnestness should cast off by repentance all that disfigures the soul that the Almighty values so. Let us ask the saints to make us think of this, and be brave enough to attempt anything to make ourselves fit for heaven. It is all included in one word for us, by our great own English saint, the Venerable Bede. He says: "Give thyself and thou shalt have that"—that is, the Kingdom of heaven. "Give thyself!" That should be the thought to make us break with sin, to cast aside anything that is not leading us to God. And then with all our soul, give

ourself in faith and hope and love to God's good service. In His mercy, He accepts ourself—with all our powers, thoughts, words, and deeds, our whole self offered to Him; and in return He gives us Himself, the light, glory, and joy of heaven: "Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is exceeding great in heaven."

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